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THE COMICS MAGAZINE • 76

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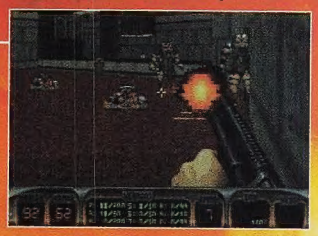

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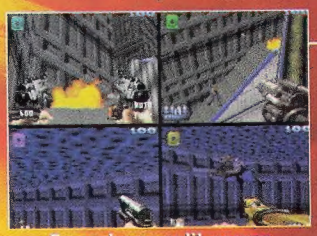

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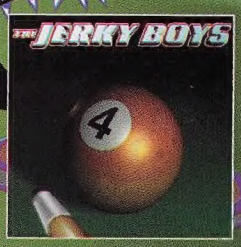

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Captain America™ & © Marvel Characters Inc.

ON THE COVER
Captain America was illustrated by George Pérez and Jimmy Palmiotti, and colored by Liquid Graphics. Flip to page 68 to see what the fan-favorite artist Pérez has in store for *Avengers*.

The Darkness™ & © Top Cow Comics

The Darkness was illustrated by Marc Silvestri and Batt, and colored by Steve Firchow. To see how Top Cow ditched the superhero gig for fantasy figures, check out page 36.

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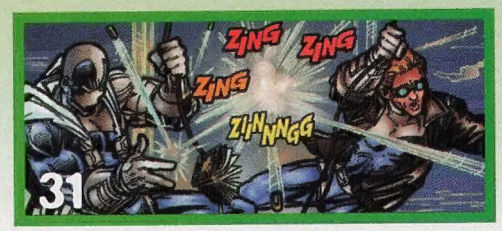

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EXCLUSIVE

#1/2 OFFER

ALAKAZAM! Here's your *only* chance to get Top Cow's exclusive *Arcanum* #1/2 comic, featuring key bad guy Matthew Royale, by series creator Brandon Peterson. Teleport to page 80 for details.

"HEY! WATCH THE CLAWS!"

Photo: Paul Schiavalli

FUTURE PLANS

This is the time of year we call "Budget Season." We wrap up the new products we want to produce and figure how much it's all going to cost. Even though I think this process seems painful, it actually gets us to focus on what to do. So we talk to all of the companies about their plans (we're doing a feature on this next month) and we get a gauge of what we think is going to be appealing and when. Then we get a sense of what '98 will shape up to be. I'll tell you right now, I'm very excited about next year. For a few reasons...

Marvel has just concluded a deal with the banks to emerge from bankruptcy and the business of putting out great products will be put into full gear. We've got lots of great plans with DC—including next month's first-ever *Nightwing* #1/2 offer. Plus editorially, there's lots happening. Especially with Supes and Batman.

Over at Image's Top Cow, inside word on '98 is that we'll see some great new projects to be surefire hits—we'll let you know soon. But I can't wait. Image's WildStorm Productions, headed by Jim Lee, has some tremendous new plans with lots of new talent added to its growing stable of creators.

We've got some great plans with them starting in the next few months, plus lots of companies have started turning on the heat. So *Wizard* will cover it all for you.

This month's covers are great. Finally, we have a Captain America cover by George Pérez—yes!!! Or there's the Marc Silvestri Darkness cover. (*Darkness* is the best work Marc has ever done.) So if you're not getting *Darkness*, I have no idea what you're waiting for. As for stories, we've got a George Pérez Q&A and a look at how Marc Silvestri's Top Cow company has changed and grown over the years. There's a feature on Marvel's new wave of books like *Alpha Flight*, *Heroes for Hire* and *Ka-Zar*. We've also got a follow-up to our much-loved Marvel "Dream Teams" feature. This time around, we're giving our picks fas to the people we'd like to see writing and drawing our favorite DC books. I'm sure you'll love them.

We're doing a very cool Avengers Chromium ID card. Make sure you carry it around—ya never, never know.

See ya next month in our biggest issue of the year!

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. *Wizard* #77 will have a free Alex Ross comic book featuring the future of the Marvel Universe!

ABC AUDITED

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The Darkness Cover Art Marc Silvestri and Batt, colored by Steve Firchow

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Stuff you don't ever read...
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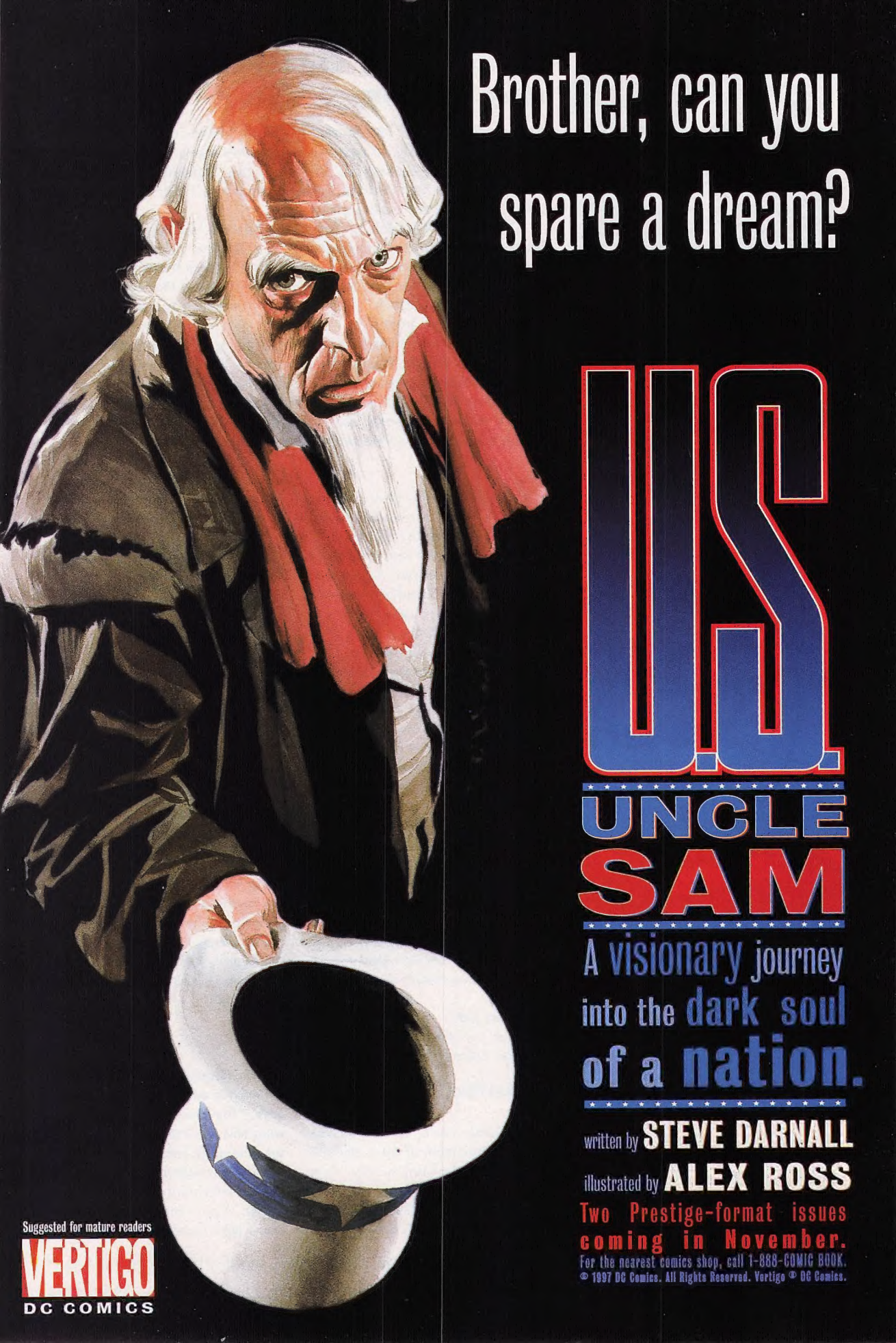
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MAGIC WORDS

'Bad Girls,' Bastion and the Bunny

Those are, more or less in order, the big letters topics this month. First and foremost, all you wacky readers were fascinated by the brief cameo appearance of Angela in the "Spawn" movie. Hopefully, last month's "Double Takes" snippet in "Wizard News" has taken care of your questions by now.

The newest X-baddie on the block, Bastion, was also a huge topic. Bastion took center stage in the big X-Men "Zero Tolerance" crossover and we received a buttload of letters from people speculating as to his identity. Just so ya know, I called Marvel Comics to find out who Bastion is. They told me, but swore me to secrecy. So I ain't spillin' the beans.

And then there's the Bunny, that large lepus that haunts the second page of "Magic Words" every month. For some reason, we got a ton of letters speculating as to who the Bunny is. Leading candidates include Thor, Marvel editrix Bobbie Chase, Bastion (Huh?) and, of all weird people...me. Once again, *I* know. But I ain't tellin'.

Let's start with some unfinished business...

Jim,

In *Wizard* #73, you asked what the term "going commando" meant and where it came from. Allow me to enlighten:

"Going commando" describes the state of not wearing underwear. According to my dad, a former Navy SEAL (**Sea-Air-Land** Operatives), the term originated in Vietnam with the SEALs. Basically, they didn't wear underwear on operations because underwear literally got in the way of things when they had to...uh...when they had to "go." So they stopped wearing undies. Since the SEALs are commandos, and wearing no undies became typical with them, other GIs started that phrase to describe it.

Disgusting, I know, but remember—you asked for it.

Chris Crowley
Boston, MA

Yeah, I guess I did ask for it. Thanks for the clarification. It's nice to know that some people forego underwear to make the world safe for democracy. For my purposes, it just makes flashing easier.

Dear Jim,

Could you please tell me who in the comic industry is Canadian?

Matt Glaude
Blind River, Ontario, Canada

Sure. Comic-makin' Canucks include the Cerebus team of Dave Sim and Gerhard, Superman artists Tom Grummett and Stuart Immonen, Ascension co-creator David Finch, that Spawny-guy Todd McFarlane and Pitt creator Dale Keown. We here at Wizard lift a pint of Blue to you all.

And speaking of Keown...

© Carlo Allegri

Dear Wizard,

Way back in *Wizard* #52, you ran a story on Dale Keown. It contained a picture of Keown playing a red Hamer bass guitar (Nice guitar!). But why does the guitar pictured have 12 tuning pins if basses only have four strings?

Ian Bennett
Aurora, CO

Said Mr. Keown, who is a rather talented musician in addition to being a comic artist, "The Hamer in the photo is a 12-string bass. It has the four regular strings tuned normally, and each one of the four has two corresponding lighter gauge strings, which are tuned one octave higher. It gives the guitar a full, lush sound, but it's a bugger to keep in tune!"

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

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Now that we have your attention, have you seen our new online store? If not, you're really missing out!

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And by the way, did the gremlin boys mention that we're offering limited edition gold books like **Ascension 2** (Gold cover) and **Witchblade Origin** (Gold cover) starting at only $5?

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Mighty Jimbo,

I run a Justice League fan club, and if you'd do me the favor of running this letter, I'm sure it would help our membership tremendously.

Our club is called "Just Us Leaguers," and we put out a quarterly newsletter featuring letters, columns, stories and art by all the folks in the club. We all dig it, and it's a lotta fun.

Also, I met up with Howard Porter, penciler on *JLA*, and gave him a copy of our last newsletter. He liked it and actually ended up joining the club! So, while there may be other Justice League fan clubs out there, I know for a fact that ours is the only one with Howard Porter in it.

Anyone interested can write to me at:

Alex Cahill
3521 Unida Place
San Diego, CA 92123

Okey-dokey. And for the record, "Just Us Leaguers" does in fact have the Howard Porter Stamp of Approval. Sez Howie: "I joined and I think the club is pretty good. Some of the art in the newsletter is pretty good, too. These guys got me sweating for my job."

Dear Jim,

1) Do you yourself read *Wizard* on a monthly basis?

2) Don't you think that chicks' bodies are way too exaggerated?

3) You and Stan Lee both possess immense power. Do you think that if you two teamed up, you could take over the world?

Until next month, I remain...

Matthew Ronald
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

1) Yep. I read it pretty much cover-to-cover, although I usually skip the price guides. And I have to read "Magic Words," since I do the column three months in advance. By the time an issue hits, I've usually forgotten most of what I've written about. Damn those dead brain cells!

2) In reality? Not really. In comics? Sure. But that's the way things are in this business. Incidentally, I also think my body is way too exaggerated around the waistline area.

3) Hmmm. An interesting proposition. So I asked Stan Lee, who said, "Who needs to team up? In case you haven't noticed, I've already taken over the world. But I'll admit it might have been easier with Jim's help."

Hey! You owe me a quarter for using my trademark closing line!

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Guys at Wizard,

I thought I'd drop you a line and add my voice to the "spot the detail in Alex Ross' work" game. I wonder if anyone else spotted this one:

In *Marvels* #2, page 11 shows a half-page of the X-Men cornered in an alleyway. The light emanating from Cyclops' visor is casting a shadow of his hand over Marvel Girl's groin. Am I reading too much into this, or is Alex hinting at the strength of feeling between the two characters? If this was his intention and not just the way my mind works, then it is a throwback to a slightly more famous work from the 17th century.

Rembrandt's 1642 painting "The Night Watch" features a group of Dutch cavaliers. The central figure has a shadow of his hand being cast onto the groin area of the man standing next to him. Historians believe that this central figure was actually a self-portrait, and this was Rembrandt's way of slyly hinting at his sexuality, being reluctant to be open about it, as attitudes then aren't what they are now.

Am I right or am I crazy?

Andrew Sheppard
Glasgow, Scotland

Well, I'm sure you're crazy on some level. But you're also right.

***Marvels** painter Alex Ross said, "It's the truth! Call me a pervert if you will, but it's the truth! When I paint, the process takes so long that I get a chance to dwell on every little detail. So I add a lot of background extras. It's a fun thing to do and a good way to pass the time while the paint dries. I figured no one would ever catch this one."*

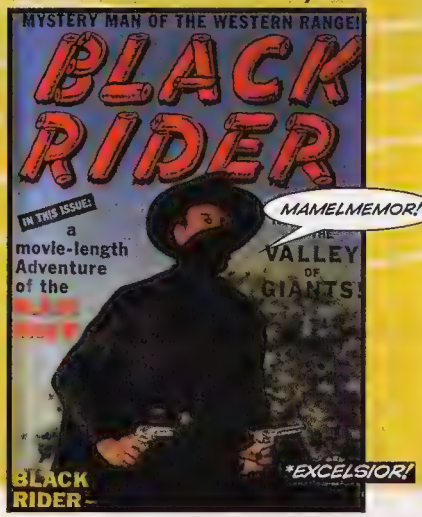
Never underestimate the power of a Scottish comic geek.

Yo, Jimmy,

Has Marvel head honcho Stan Lee ever appeared in a comic?

Michael Cotey
South Milwaukee, WI

Yep. In fact, Stan the Man may very well have been the first comic creator to appear both in and on a comic. Stan posed for the photo cover of the western title Black Rider #8 back in 1950 and he wrote both himself and Fantastic Four artist Jack Kirby into Fantastic Four #10 in January 1963. More recently, Stan "hosted" a "Saturday Night Live" show in 1978's Marvel Team-Up #74 and narrated all the Marvel "Flashback" books in May 1997.



Dear Wizard,
Since Marvel is revitalizing everybody from Iron Fist to Shang-Chi, is there any possibility for a new *Inhumans* title?

Andrés Rey de Castro
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Maybe. Everything from* Marvel Team-Up *to* Man-Thing *is coming back at* Marvel *these days.* Inhumans *has a shot, too. Marvel Marketing Manager John Dokes said, "Several creative teams are working on proposals for a new Inhumans title right now. If we do publish one of the proposals, it'll probably see the light of day in late 1998 or early '99."

Dear Jim,
Why does the top of Captain America's costume sometimes look like fish scales?

Emerson Odango
Norfolk, VA

Because in post-"Heroes Reborn," neo-"Heroes Return" nuevo-Jim Lee-revised continuity, Cap is now a water-breathin', gill-sportin' merman who pees in the pool whenever he wants!

Nah, that's a lie. The real reason is that Cap wears chain-mail armor under his costume. It comes in real handy when vampires bite his neck and stuff, like Baron Blood tried to in* Captain America *#254.

Hey, Jim,
I've seen some comics that credit "breakdowns" and "finishes" instead of pencils and inks. Just exactly what do "breakdowns" and "finishes" mean?

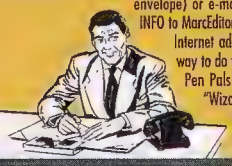
Umar Arshad
Sterling, VA
Gumer12@aol.com

Good question. Let's ask Dan Jurgens, who's been working in such a way (pretty much doing breakdowns, as he'll explain) on DC's* Teen Titans, *where George Pérez has been doing finishes. Take it away, Dan...

"It means the inker does a little extra

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Make a friend! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on page 14 (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your REGULAR ADDRESS INFO to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").



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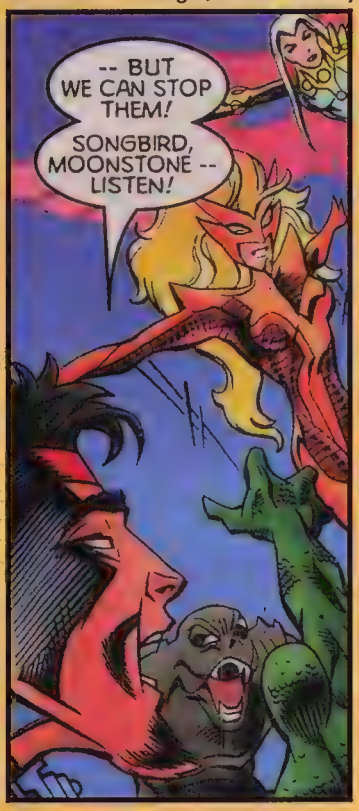
Col. Cuauhtehoc C.P. 06500
Mexico, D.F. Mexico
Likes: *The X-Files*, *Star Wars*

work. I draw the page with all the backgrounds, details, and so on, but don't actually do any shading or black in any areas. The finisher does that, taking it one step beyond just inking. A finisher gets to approach a job with a little more of an artistic eye, making more of a personal statement, since he's not working from fully realized pencils."

Dear Wizard,
I read *Thunderbolts* #4 and noticed that on page 16, panel 1, Techno calls Meteorite "Moonstone," her bad-guy name, on live television. What if someone noticed? Wouldn't this blow the Thunderbolts' cover and show the world they're really the Masters of Evil?

Andrew J. Elmer
Madison, WI



Hmmm. This could be trouble for the T-bolts. Was it a clever plot device? Or was it just a typo?* Thunderbolts *writer Kurt Busiek told us, "The screw-up was intentional on my part, but not on Techno's. As to if it was really broadcast, who knows? Odds are it went out, but it may not have made TV screens. But it may be on tape somewhere."

Dear Jim,
Can you please tell me what Fabian Nicieza has been up to since he left Marvel? I believe he was one of the most talented writers they ever had.

John Sheldon
Baltimore, MD

Fabe is now the president and publisher of Acclaim Comics, where he writes* Troublemakers, *a fairly nifty-swell teen-team title, and the occasional Turok project.

Wizard,
I am a big fan of *Gen13* and I was wondering if you could get a hold of the inker to ask him how the heck he knows where to put all the shadows on the Gen13 costumes. I can never get it right when I draw them.

Jenny Anderson
Kennesaw, GA

We got a hold of the inker, a Mr. Alex Garner, and asked him. He said, "The key is to be aware of the light. Picture a metal pinball. The point at which the light hits it is its brightest point. Since a pinball is shiny, that point is going to be very bright, but very narrow. Points away from where the light hits it will be less bright, and eventually fade to shadow. Most artists just have an instinct for light and shadow, and I've done so many lines I'm practically on autopilot. But if you study photos and look at a variety of subjects—look at a leather jacket in addition to the pinball—you'll start to know where the shadows go."

To Wizard,
1) Has there been a crossover between Hulk and the Savage Dragon? If not, who would win in a fight between them?

2) How tall is Marc Silvestri?

3) I think my friend stole my *Wizard*! Should I beat him up just in case he did?

4) What's your definition of the meaning of life?

John Reed
Melbourne, Australia

1) Good question. No, there hasn't been one, but if it did happen, here's my opinion: As much as I love the Dragon, the Hulk always wins. But forget what I think. As is our norm here, let's ask the experts.

Dragon creator Erik Larsen came in with a surprising answer: "I gotta figure the Hulk would kick his ass. The Dragon may be more agile and a better fighter, but Hulk is strongest one there is. If I were writing it, I'd probably find a way to let Dragon win, but I admit it wouldn't be realistic."

Incredible Hulk* writer Peter David *summed up the winner of a Hulk/Dragon battle simply: "Two words: The readers."

2) He's 198 centimeters. For those of you speak American, that makes him 5-foot-18.

3) Yep. Better safe than sorry. Always err on the side of gratuitous violence. And give that rat-bastard a kidney punch for me, wouldja?

4) Live fast, die old, eat as much broccoli as you possibly can.

Dear Wizard,
Who would win in a fight between Darkchylde and Witchblade?

Ethan Davis
msdavis@value.net

Hulk smash puny human chicks.

Hey, Jim,
If I were in charge of the comic industry, I'd rule it like an evil dictator rules his country. Now dance for me!

Dave Hirsch
Nashville, TN

"Dave Hirsch," huh? Are you sure your name isn't "Shooter"?

Dear Wizard,
I'm a superhero and supervillain drawer, and I need some professional advice. I'm not very good at women. If you could give me some advice, it sure would help a lot.

Luke Kluender
St. Louis, MO

Ooooooh, another comic book "drawer," huh? Didn't I make fun of one of you a few months back?

Anyhoo, if you're looking for advice on how to do better with women, I'd be happy to help: Stand up straight, wash your face, change that damn Gambit T-shirt you wear every day, deodorize, get a frame of reference outside of comics and "The X-Files" so you can carry on a conversation out in the world, wipe and buy a comb.

And fer cryin' out loud, trim those

PENPALS

Anthony Aranda
Age: 15 Sex: Male
9203 W Baden Street
Tolleson, AZ 85353
Likes: *Spawn*, all X titles, *Amazing Spider-Man*

Tony Gultice
Age: 19 Sex: Male
1590 Kylemore Drive
Xenia, OH 45385
Likes: *Gambit*, *X-Men*, *Spawn*

Tony Elmer
Age: 10 Sex: Male
11232 E. Beryl Ave.
Scottsdale, AZ 85259
Likes: *Spawn*, any Spider-Man title, *X-Men*

Christopher Marshall
Age: 12 Sex: Male
RR 3 Box 183A
Castlewood, VA 24224
Likes: Sailor Moon, almost any anime, *Spawn*

John Clark
Age: 17 Sex: Male
RR 1 Box 21C
Brighton, IL 62012
Likes: all Spider-titles, *Savage Dragon*, *Spawn*

Tom Vanlerberghe
Age: 17 Sex: Male
Brugsesteenweg 12
8370 Blankenberge, Belgium
Likes: Spider-titles, *Gen13*, *Witchblade*

Odette Bustamante
Age: 22 Sex: Female
Rio Danubio #36-402
Col. Cuauhtehoc C.P. 06500
Mexico, D.F. Mexico
Likes: *The X-Files*, *Star Wars*

A SMASHING THREE-ISSUE MINISERIES BEGINNING IN NOVEMBER

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4

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LETTER ART

Fans who have their letter art printed this month will each receive a copy of *Ash* autographed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The creator of the best envelope wins a signed Ash sketch by Palmiotti, plus the signed comic and signed *Wizard* issue! (Thanks very much for the stuff, Jimmy and Joe!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and **a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope. Good luck!

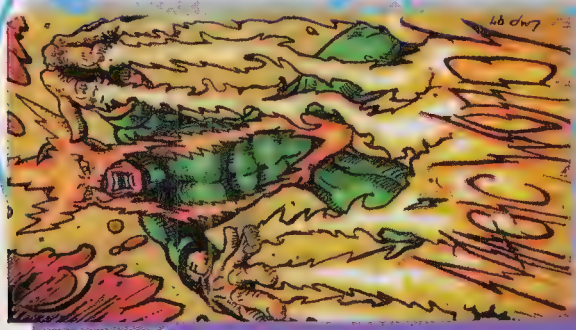
THE PRIZE

envelope of the month

JACK-IN-THE-BOX SHOWDOWN
Nick Gutierrez Bakersfield, CA

J VS. FOUR EYES
Angel Ruiz Phoenix, AZ

A MORNING WITH CLOWN
Chip Telano Marrero, LA



ELECTRO
Larry Ponko Elkhart, IN

we're in the home stretch...

damn nosehairs ya got hangin' out. They're gross.

Dear Wizard Honchos,
The next time you have a few drinks in you and are really bored, play the light-up Star Wars figure game! Turn on your black light and see which figures shine in the ultraviolet rays! Stormtroopers have limbs that glow real pretty, but their torsos don't. R5-D4 looked neat too, except for those two pieces that open to launch his missile. Luke's green saber looks awful keen as well. But be warned that the novelty of this wears off real quick.

Jeff Laur
Towson, MD

The next time I have a few drinks in me and I'm really bored, I'm gonna come over to your house and slap you down hard. You are so far gone, there is no helping you. I give you the ultimate insult: I refuse to heckle you anymore.

AAAARRRGGHH! I can't resist! Must...heckle...further! What the hell are you doing with a black light, anyways? No one has those anymore! What are you? Some bizarre casualty of the '60s?

Ugh. One more letter and I'm gone...

Dear Jim,
I heard that tonight is Ladies' Night. Is this true?

Deke Lohmiller
Speed12573@aol.com

Yep. All ladies through the Wizard Press door every Wednesday get quarter well drinks after paying a mere $1 cover. Hey, it's the only way we know to get Lars Pearson, our new price guide guy, a date.

And on that note, I'm outta here. It's after last call and it's lookin' like mop-up time. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin once had the rockin' pneumonia and the boogie-woogie flu. But 30 milligrams of penicillin and a hot toddy knocked 'em right out.

Send letters to:
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151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com

"There is no storm such as this. It is a sickness in the sky. It is crafted in chaos, and even the darkness breathes."

–Orim, Journals of the Weatherlight, upon arrival in Rath

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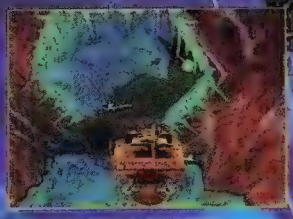
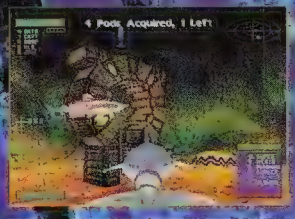


10 TOTALLY DIFFERENT HULL-CRUSHING ENVIRONMENTS.



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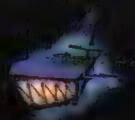
This is what they really mean when they talk about totally immersive gameplay. Take a dip in these sub-infested waters for a spot of nuclear fishin'. 12 subaquatic psychos want to send you down and they've got the torpedoes to prove it.

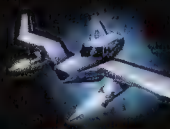
Don't worry. You'll know you're in too deep when the water pressure caves your head in.

Looks like you're in deep ship.



LUCKJAW

ARMAGEDDON



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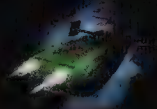
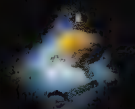


STALINGRAD

ARCHIMEDES



LA GRIFFE

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DC Introduces 'Superman Red/Superman Blue'

But will story arc mark return of classic Superman costume?

Will the classic Superman costume return? After a controversial move in March that changed Superman's well-recognized 60-year look, DC Comics has announced that Superman is altering his appearance *again*, but not back to the traditional red and blue suit...at least, not yet.

In an upcoming four-month story arc that runs through all the Superman titles, Superman's new energy-based powers will cause Superman to split into two versions of himself: Superman Red and Superman Blue. The Superman Red/Blue story arc is a tribute to a 1950s Elseworlds-like Superman tale which split the Man of Steel into two people. The upcoming Superman Red/Blue plotline has no direct correlation to the '50s story, but it may act as a building block to the return of Supes' classic garb.

"I guess you could look at this as the next stage in the whole 'new costume' story," said **Dan Jurgens**, writer of *Superman*. "But now we're elevating the story. The stakes become bigger."

The next stage begins in a 64-page one-shot with a special 3-D cover entitled *Superman Red/Superman Blue* which hits stores in December. Creative chores are handled by the entire Superman family team of writers and artists. Superman's nemeses, the **Cyborg** and the **Toyman** will play a huge factor in the story, causing Superman to split into two separate beings. As a team, Cyborg and Toyman capture the now energy-based Superman and disperse his energy across space into thousands of tiny particles. But Superman's subconscious finds a way to pull himself together—into two separate beings. One Superman will maintain the new blue-and-white costume, while the other will have a red version of the same design.

"Superman is in a position where he desperately needs to be in two places at once," said *Adventures of Superman* writer **Karl Kesel**. "Now being an energy being and not knowing what his limits are, Superman finds out how to be in those two places. And in the course of this story, they discover that recombination is *not* an option. So the two Supermen have to deal with the situation."

The two Supermen operate independent of each other, and adding a competitive twist, both are committed to the idea that they are the one true Superman. This, quite naturally, creates problems.

"Imagine Lois Lane walking into her apartment and finding two Clarks," said Jurgens. "Or imagine two Supermans showing up at the JLA base on the moon. This story will give us the opportunity to do some bizarre scenarios that you might find on old TV sitcoms like 'Bewitched.'"

So which one's the real Supes? The Superman writers aren't telling who, or even *if* there is one true Supes. "Both Supermen know that the Cyborg was involved in the split," said Kesel. "Both are convinced that they themselves are the real Superman and the other might actually be the Cyborg or at least an impostor."

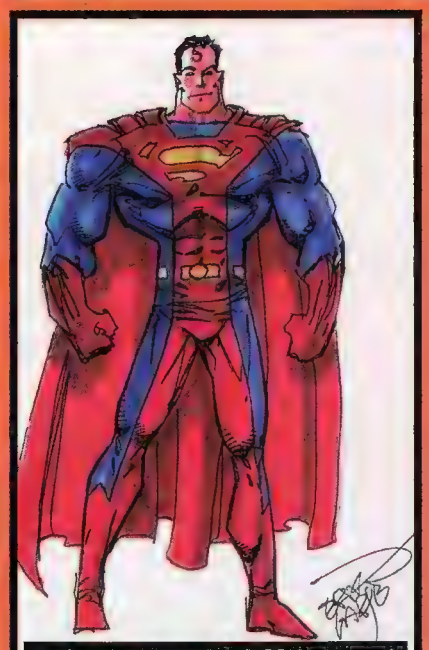
The resolution of Superman Red/Blue? It's coming in April and may or may not see the return of a traditional Superman costume. "I don't know what to say about that," said Kesel. "We're going to let this play out naturally. Whether that means the return of the classic costume, I guess, remains to be seen." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Will the real Superman please stand up? The Man of Steel splits in two in *Superman Red/Superman Blue*.

FASHION SHOW

Three years ago, the powers at DC did the unthinkable: They changed Batman's costume, tweaking it slightly to update it for the '90s. Might they do the same with Superman? If so, here are some takes on what the new Man of Steel might look like from three top artists—**Jim Lee** (inked by Armando Durruthy), **Erik Larsen** and *Green Lantern* artist **Darryl Banks**.

DESIGN BY JIM LEE— "I'm a purist, but I'd mix the retro look with a modern look. Make the Superman symbol more prominent—we live in a world of brand names, after all. I think the short sleeves work well with the short gloves."



DESIGN BY ERIK LARSEN— "He needs gloves! The easiest way to figure out Superman's identity is to take his fingerprints off of something he touched. And the colors are classic. I wouldn't change them at all."

DESIGN BY DARRYL BANKS— "Since he's the Man of Steel, I want to give him a more metallic feel. And while a lot of kids joke about Superman wearing his underwear on the outside, we're used to seeing that red around that area. As a result, I made a gold-and-red belt to keep the red toward the mid-section."

"Star Wars" Prequel footage debuts at local comic con. "Uhhh... Lucas is nuts," commented numb fan. "I mean, the bagels on her head were bad, but you shoulda seen where Luke kept his donut."

New artificial intelligence toys unveiled. "Hi, everybody—I'm Chippy! Do I have a soul?" chirped space-age toy before his little plastic body was crushed by rabid Christians.

Sylvester Stallone takes another pay cut to star as Cosmic Boy in low-budget Legion of Super-Heroes flick. "Yo, I pud on anothuh tirty pounds to do it," commented bloated has-been before eating the midget in the Gates costume.

ahead

GEN X/ GEN[13] REUNITE!

HEROES RETURN PREVIEW!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Superteam of the Gods

JLA Assemble!

With January's *JLA* #16, DC Comics will unveil the final 12-person roster of its premier superteam.

"The basic structure is to map the 12 Greek gods on the heroes of the DC Universe," hints *JLA* writer **Grant Morrison**. But DC ain't talkin' as to the exact makeup of the team. Since we're feverish to know what heroes will make the cut, *Wizard* decided to take its best shot at matching the 12 main Greek gods (according to *Compton's Encyclopedia*) to the JLAers who best correspond. Hey, it's all in the name of fanboy fun! ■ *The* Wizard *Staff*

ZEUS **SUPERMAN**

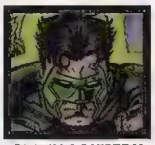
Zeus ruled the Greek gods with immense power, while Superman leads the JLA pantheon as the most powerful guy in the DCU.

HADES **BATMAN**

Hades ruled over a mythological underworld, much like Batman rules the thoughts and fears of the criminal underworld.

HERA **WONDER WOMAN**

Hera is Queen of the Gods. As DC's female powerhouse, Wonder Woman fits that bill.



APOLLO **GREEN LANTERN**

Apollo is the God of Light and Youth, which pretty much sums up the rookie GL, whose power ring generates green light.

HERMES **FLASH**

Hermes was the fastest Greek god alive, while Flash is the fastest man alive.

POSEIDON **AQUAMAN**

Both these guys have been tagged as "King of the Seas."

ARTEMIS **GREEN ARROW**

Green Arrow is the longbow hunter to match Artemis as the Goddess of the Hunt.

HEPHAESTUS **MARTIAN MANHUNTER**

Hephaestus is the Blacksmith of the Gods, and the Manhunter *did* supply the JLA with Martian technology for the Watchtower and transport tubes.

HESTIA **CAPTAIN MARVEL**

Captain Marvel is just a kid at heart and brings a familial, innocent presence to the team. Not too shabby a match with the Goddess of Hearth and Home.

ARES **ORION**

The destructive demeanor of Orion seems a perfect match for a God of War.

ATHENA **ORACLE**

A dark horse choice, but it makes sense. Athena is the Goddess of Wisdom, and Oracle is the ultimate intelligence source thanks to her ability to hack into every computer in the world.

APHRODITE **ZAURIEL**

Aphrodite is the Goddess of Love, and Zauriel is a former guardian angel who has known nothing but love.

Comics Graduate to the Ivy League

Think comics are just lowbrow trash? The prestigious Ivy League's **Brown University** would disagree.

Long-time comic collector Mike Ciaraldi was recently looking for a home for his collection of 60,000+ comic books, and Brown was happy to be that home. The Ciaraldi collection will now serve as a reference of comic art in popular culture.

For those of you scoring at home, 60,000 issues fill over 255 comic boxes, enough to swamp a home—Ciaraldi's. "The collection was too big," he said. "I couldn't find what I was looking for when I wanted it. So I figured that since I'd already read them, now other people should have that chance." To find an ultimate resting place for his books, Ciaraldi looked to the Internet, where posters helped him decide that donating the collection to Brown would be the way to go.

Ciaraldi's massive collection is being transferred to the library in installments, which should take about eight years to complete. ■ *Matthew Brady*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **DC's Next Big Crossover...** will probably feature them JLA cats. Word is that their next all-universe crossover (a la 1996's *Final Night* and 1997's *Genesis*) will spotlight the JLA taking on a newer, badder Starro the Conqueror in late 1998.

• **Turner's Turn!** It's common knowledge that Top Cow has signed *Witchblade* penciling superstar Michael Turner to a long-term exclusive deal. What's *not* common knowledge is that part of the deal may include a new Turner-owned Top Cow title for sometime in '98. Keep yer eyes peeled!

• **Hulk Transformation!** Word out of Marvel's *Incredible Hulk* office is that big changes are headin' ol' Green Genes' way. Just what the changes *are*, they ain't sayin'—but they have specified a month: May 1998.

• **Blue Meets Green!** That's looking like the plan. Word is that DC Comics is negotiating with Erik Larsen to get a Savage Dragon/Superman two-issue crossover up and running. Look for it in late '98 if the deal gets finalized.

• **Acclaim Heads South!** "South Park," that is. Our spies tell us that the comic license to adapt the Comedy Central network cartoon hit "South Park" is in play, with Acclaim Comics as the early front-runner.

• **Image Explosion!** Jim Valentino's little corner of Image Comics is looking to become "small press central," as Valentino is targeting another 10 indy books to bring under the Image banner in 1998.

CORRECTION!

We goofed on photo credits in *Wizard* #75, big-time. We forgot to credit photographer Paul Schiraldi on photos in "Magic Words," the Jim Lee Q&A and the Scavenger Hunt contest. Also uncredited in the Scavenger Hunt were photographers Craig Blankenhorn, Jim McHugh and Albert Ortega. The Johnny Depp photo on page 122 was from the Everett Collection. The Tia Carrere photo on page 123 was taken by Mitchell Haddad. The Matt McColm photo on page 124 is by Danny O'Connor. Our sincerest apologies to everyone. And yes, we are all being flogged with 70 mm film as you read this.

Ed McGuinness Jumps to 'Fighting American'

Why would Ed McGuinness, rising artistic star of Marvel Comics' *Deadpool*, leave a prime spot? According to McGuinness, it's a matter of time...and quality.

"I was just starting out and I got so far behind that basically, I couldn't keep up any more," he said. "I wasn't putting out the quality I wanted."

So now with *Deadpool* behind him—August's issue #9 was his last—and time to prepare, McGuinness is ready to re-enter the game. He's handling the art chores on Awesome Entertainment's *Fighting American: Rules of the Game*, a four-issue mini-series written by Jeph Loeb (*Cable*) set to launch in December. *Rules of the Game* puts a price on Fighting American's head and features a bevy of old Jack Kirby-created villains out to collect vengeance.

"There's re-introduction of old villains, but they're not going to be done in the old way," McGuinness said. "We're going to modernize them all." The artist also thinks he's back in this game for the long haul. "They want to make *Fighting American* a monthly," he said. "So I may well be doing that. And eventually, I'll finagle a creator-owned project in here." ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

McGuinness' Fighting American

Earthquake Rocks Gotham City in "Batquake"

Gotham City is getting destroyed. And for once, it's by a menace **Batman** can't fight.

An earthquake registering 7.6 on the Richter scale will level Gotham this February. The "Batquake" storyline officially begins with February's *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #73 and crosses over into all Batman-related titles for two months, ending DC's former policy of not crossing over Bat-books.

"It's the first crossover we've done in 18 months," said Scott Peterson, Batman group editor. "This is not a story you can tell in only one title. It would take over a year to tell."

DC Comics will also release three one-shots in conjunction with the quake, including an ***Arkham Special***, a ***Blackgate Special*** and a ***Huntress/Spoiler Special***. The crossover concludes with the March release of *Robin* #53.

"It's destruction on a biblical scale," said **Chuck Dixon**, writer of *Detective Comics*, *Robin* and occasional other Bat-projects. "We'll be dealing with the aftermath and the architectural evidence of the destruction for years to come."

Completely unprepared for an earthquake of this magnitude, many of Gotham's landmarks get destroyed. And while quake-proof Arkham Asylum is unaffected, Blackgate Prison is not, allowing some of Batman's enemies to escape. Look for **Cluemaster**, the **Baffler** and **Firefly** to be on the prowl.

"Batman will have a hard time getting around the city," said Dixon. "So **Nightwing** comes in from Blüdhaven to help him. Robin, Huntress and the Spoiler will be spread all over the city trying to cope."

As the story progresses, a new villain will be introduced. "Batman is faced with something he can't do a damned thing about," said Dixon. "Until this new villain—who we haven't even named yet—claims responsibility for the earthquake, making him a big nemesis for Gotham and Batman."

"The *crossover* may end in March," commented Dixon, "but in Gotham, nothing is ever done right. So don't expect the wreckage to be cleared up anytime soon...or possibly ever." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Gen X/Gen[13] Teams Hook Up for 2nd Crossover

Marvel Comics' **Generation X** and WildStorm Productions' **Gen[13]** are hooking up for a second crossover in December.

Following the success of WildStorm's *Gen[13]/Generation X* crossover in July, Marvel will now publish a *Generation X/Gen[13]* crossover that hits in December. **James Robinson** (*Starman*) has been enlisted to write the 48-page one-shot and **Salvador Larocca** (*Excalibur*) is scheduled to pencil.

The crossover spoofs classic 1950s horror movies and features the cast of both *Generation X* and *Gen[13]* vacationing at an isolated castle. But in a fashion found only in campy horror, it turns out that the owner of this so-called resort (a new character named Mr. Pretorious), has lured the teams there in an attempt to harvest their organs and sell them to the wealthy.

"Pretorious has a bunch of monsters—humans and animals he's spliced together—that he's made through experiments roaming the castle. They'll actually capture some of the team members," said Editor Kelly Corvese. "The rest will have to team up to stop his maniacal plans."

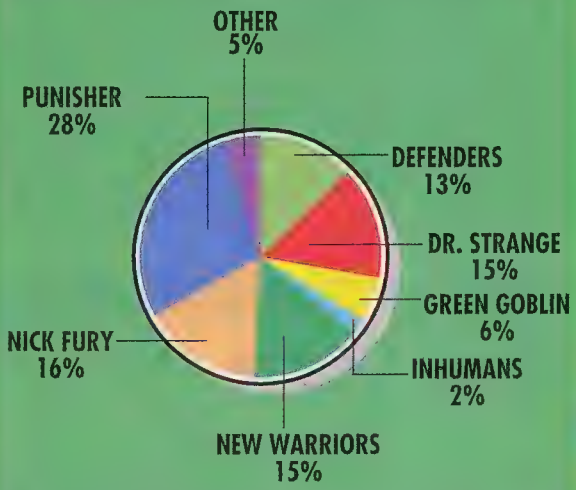
In keeping with the kitsch theme, Corvese promises a lot of fun. "It's young'uns with powers and a variety of different personalities," he said. "And with two teams, you have double the potential love interests, double competition and lots more teen angst. We're telling a very straightforward, fun story that's just going to be a fun romp." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

A Generation X/Gen[13] sequel is slated for December.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Have ya noticed that Marvel's been reviving a ton of old comic series recently? *Ka-Zar, Alpha Flight* and *Heroes for Hire* have all come back in the last year, to name a few. So what will be the next Marvel revival? Better yet, what do fans want to see Marvel bring back from the dead? That's what we asked our readers this month in a poll conducted via our Wizard World forum on America Online.

WHICH MARVEL REVIVAL WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?



A big gun equals a big winner. The Punisher is Marvel's most wanted! "When he wasn't overused—with three monthly titles and guest starring in every other Marvel title every month—the Punisher was the coolest anti-hero ever," posted one respondent. "And if Jim Lee controls him, that'd be awesome!" Seems the rumor that Jim Lee may be overseeing *Defenders, Dr. Strange, Nick Fury* and *Punisher* fueled a ton of responses for these books.

New Warriors also scored high. "If you got the original team together, that'd be cool," said one fan. "I want Marvel Boy back, not Justice. Keep to the young heroes we care about like Night Thrasher, Firestar and Speedball, and it's golden." ■ *Conrad Bain*

Deceased Editor's Ashes Mixed in Marvel Comic's Ink

Along with a great story, buyers of Marvel's ***Squadron Supreme*** trade paperback get a little more than they bargained for—longtime Marvel Editor **Mark Gruenwald**'s ashes mixed in the ink.

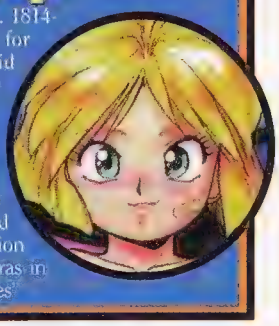
"His last act was something unique in comics," Gruenwald's widow Catherine said. She shrugged off suggestions that mixing her husband's ashes with the ink used in printing the reprint of 1985-86's 12-issue *Squadron Supreme* mini-series that Mark wrote was a publicity stunt.

"It wasn't an 'ash for cash' deal," she chuckled. "Mark requested it in his will. I knew of it, since we read our wills to each other before we were married. When he originally read it to me, he had a smirk on his face, but I knew it was what he really wanted.

"Mark had superheroes in his head all the time—he lived and breathed them," Catherine said. "Mixing his ashes into the ink, making him an actual part of a comic book, has shown that passion and dedication can live on even after you're gone." ■ *Matthew Brady*

we LOOKED it up

man•ga (MON gah), noun. 1814-present **1** Japanese word for comics and cartoons; said term originated by woodcut artist Hokusai Katsushika **2** style currently influential in American comics and characterized by rounded textures, "speed lines" and big eyes **3** mispronunciation of role played by Alex Karras in Mel Brooks' "Blazing Saddles"



DC Wraps up 1997 with 'New Year's Evil'

The last day of 1997 will be a dark one in the DC Universe, as DC ships eight nasty one-shots.

DC's "New Year's Evil" rings out '97 with eight $1.95 one-shots focusing strictly on villains that all hit comic stores on New Year's Eve. It also rings *in* two new characters who will play significant roles in ongoing titles: ***Prometheus***, a new foe for the very hot JLA, and ***Gog***, the mentor of Magog, who played a critical role in last year's ***Kingdom Come.***

Mark Waid, writer on *Kingdom Come* and the forthcoming *Kingdom* regular series—still without an art team or official launch date—handles writing chores on *Gog*, with art supplied by penciler **Jerry Ordway** and inker Dennis Janke. Waid said Gog will serve as a linchpin in the eventual *Kingdom* and so *Gog* #1 serves as "the overture" to that project. Set 20 years after *Kingdom Come, Gog* also features a glimpse of Superman at that time.

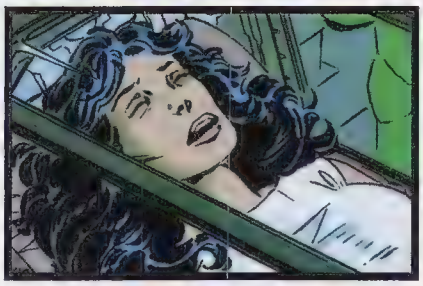
Prometheus is the JLA's new nemesis.

Prometheus #1 stars yet another foe developed by writer **Grant Morrison** to combat the JLA. Morrison describes the character as a "Batman of evil," a martial artist who mimics the moves of other masters, including everyone's favorite Dark Knight. The one-shot, which Morrison said traces the villain's origin, will not be the last of Prometheus; he'll be back in *JLA* #16-#17 (January-February, '98) for his first full encounter with the superteam.

Also on the New Year's Evil line-up is *Body Doubles*, featuring characters from *Resurrection Man*, as written by Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning with art by Joe Phillips and Jasen Rodriguez; *Dark Nemesis*, as featured in *Teen Titans*, written by **Dan Jurgens** with art by ChrisCross and Wade Von Grawbadger; *Darkseid*, written by **John Byrne** with art by **Sal Buscema**; *Mr. Mxyzptlk* written by **Alan Grant**, with art by Tom Morgan and Scott Koblish; *The Rogues* (a.k.a. Flash's Rogues Gallery), by **Brian Augustyn** and Ron Wagner; and *Scarecrow* by **Peter Milligan** and Duncan Fegredo. **Jason Pearson** (*Body Bags*) supplies covers for all eight books. ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

Wonder Woman Dies, Gets Better

Apparently, that which killed Wonder Woman will only make her stronger. After succumbing in September's *Wonder Woman* #127 to injuries sustained in battle, comics' most recognizable heroine will get better. Much better.

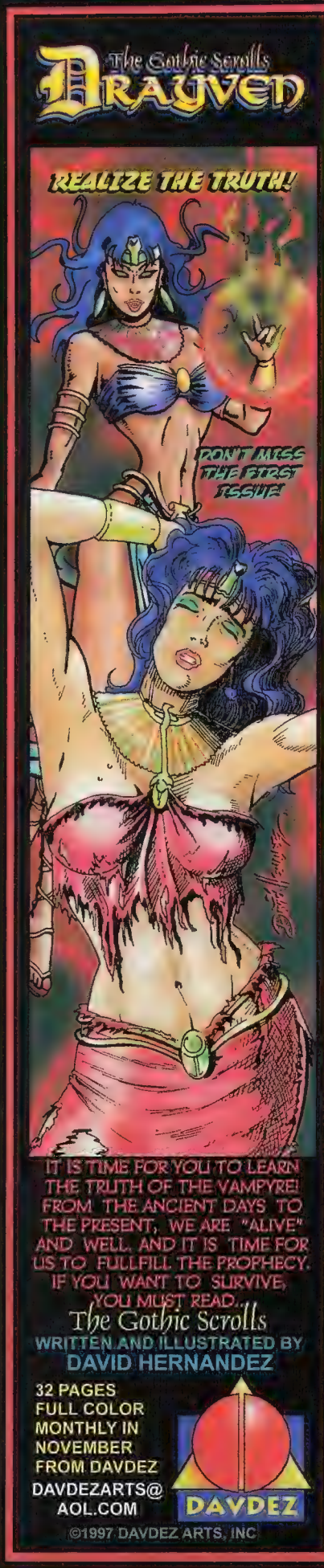


Wonder Woman—hero or menace?

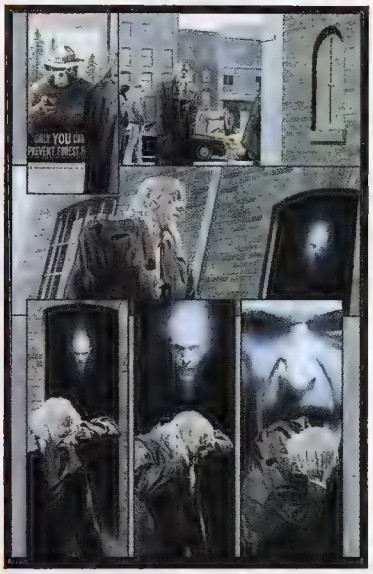
According to editor **Paul Kupperberg**, after Wonder Woman's death, her mother Hippolyta's prayers to the goddess Hera will result in a little divine intervention. Hera resurrects Diana and brings her to Mount Olympus where she becomes the Goddess of Truth—and therefore much more powerful. How powerful? "If there was ever a question about her level of power compared to Superman's, that question will be answered," said Kupperberg.

But that's just half the story. While Diana struggles with her newfound godliness—including difficulties using her amplified powers—Hippolyta takes over being Wonder Woman. And when **Jay Garrick**, the original Flash, catches a glimpse of her on TV and is rushed with repressed memories of his having met this Wonder Woman, DC continuity is expanded upon. A meeting between Garrick and Hippolyta follows, and the pair travel back to the 1940s, where Hippolyta meets the **Justice Society of America** and signs on as a member. Hippolyta thus becomes DC's *first* Wonder Woman. Meanwhile, in the JLA, Diana's Justice League teammates are unaffected, as the concurrent *JLA* storyline takes place 15 years in the future, where Diana is back. But hopping back to present day, problems may arise.

Hippolyta will return to current day for a few issues of adventures at about the same time Diana returns to Earth. What next? A confrontation with the Justice League. It seems Diana's enhanced powers cause…difficulties that lead to her own teammates having to subdue her in late 1998. ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*



A Salute to Alex Ross' 'Uncle Sam'



At long last, the next new project from painter **Alex Ross** (*Kingdom Come*) is here. *Uncle Sam*, a two-issue DC/Vertigo mini-series that Ross calls "my little bit of a rant on America," debuts this month. Ross cautions that the story is "not a superhero tale. I think it's a well-justified poke at some points in our history we don't like to talk about."

The story that Ross co-plotted with friend Steve Darnall focuses on Uncle Sam, the actual American icon, as an amnesiac skid row bum. As Sam tries to figure out who he is, he discovers what America is. As these preview pictures show, the answer may not be pretty.

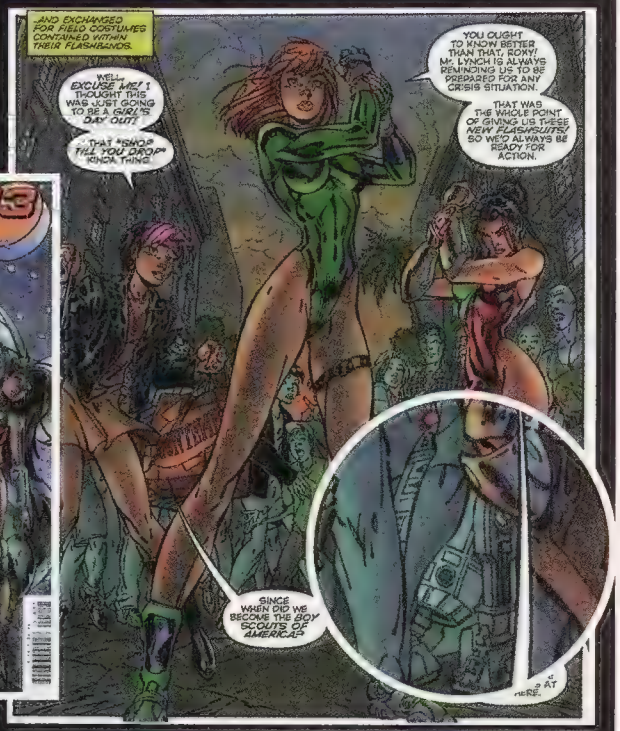
SIGOURNEY WEAVER WINONA RYDER

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRESENTS A BRANDYWINE PRODUCTION SIGOURNEY WEAVER WINONA RYDER ALIEN RESURRECTION RON PERLMAN DAN HEDAYA J.E. FREEMAN BRAD DOURIF AND MICHAEL WINCOTT
MUSIC BY JOHN FRIZZELL ALIEN EFFECTS DESIGNED AND CREATED BY ALEC GILLIS AND TOM WOODRUFF, JR. FEATURING HERVE SCHNEID A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER NIGEL PHELPS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DARIUS KHONDJI A.F.C. PRODUCED BY GORDON CARROLL DAVID SILER WALTER HILL AND BILL BADALATO
R RESTRICTED DOLBY DIGITAL BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY DAN O'BANNON AND RONALD SHUSETT WRITTEN BY JOSS WHEDON DIRECTED BY JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON RCA VICTOR WWW.ALIENRESURRECTION.COM 20th Century Fox

DOUBLE TAKES

Is that R2-D2 hiding on page 11 of *Gen*[13]#16? *Wizard* confronted *Gen*[13] penciler J. Scott Campbell about this "Star Wars" misappropriation and lied to him, saying that Lucasfilm was going to sue him for copyright infringement.

Campbell ran scared, saying, "I just did it in pencils for fun. It's buried, and I didn't expect the coloring to call attention to it. I'm sure if we reprint it, we'll take him out. Oh, geez. This is a losing battle. George Lucas is one guy I *don't* want to piss off. This is like going up against Disney." Poor J. fell hard for our innocent little prank...

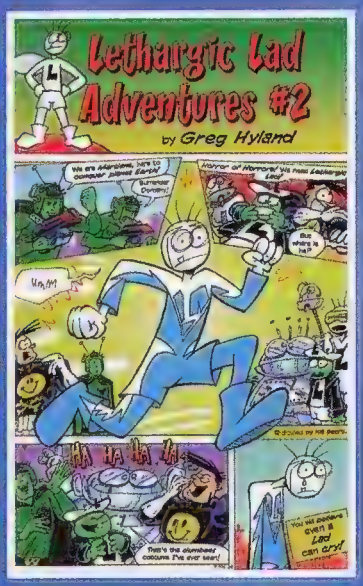


ABSTRACT STUDIO
Terry Moore's first five issues of Homage's *Strangers in Paradise* are collected in December's *Love Me Tender* trade paperback ($12.95), in black and white for the first time.

ACCLAIM COMICS
Acclaim's "Goat Month" kicks off in November with the goat from ***Quantum and Woody*** appearing in all of Acclaim's Valiant Heroes titles.

ARCHIE COMICS
Civil war breaks out in **Sonic's** land in December's *Sonic Super Special #4*, a 48-page, $2.25 whopper.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
December sees the *Awesome Christmas Special*, featuring short stories starring **The Coven**, KABOOM and the Fighting American.



CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
December's ***Lethargic Lad*** *#2* has LL take on a fleet of Earth-invading Martians, and looks at the amazing Walrus-Boy's frightening condition.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Concrete fans rejoice! December starts the five-part *Concrete: Strange Armor* series, which promises to reveal Concrete's full origin!...Get into the holiday spirit with...**Hellboy**? December's *Hellboy Christmas Special* is a 48-pager containing stories by Mike Mignola, Geof Darrow and Steve Purcell....**Frank Miller** and Dave Gibbons' three-part *Martha Washington Saves the World* hits stores this December....Paul Gulacy and **P. Craig Russell** provide art for the six-issue *Star Wars: Crimson Empire* mini beginning in December.

EVENT COMICS
Ascension artists David Finch and Batt will supply alternate covers to the monthly *Ash #1-#5*, starting in November.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
In November, *Love & Rockets* character Penny Century gets a self-titled ongoing series written and drawn by *L&R*'s **Jaime Hernandez**.

FOUR COLOR IMAGES
Over $14,000 was raised at a recent art auction at the Four Color Images Gallery, benefiting the Lou Stathis Memorial Foundation, which awards scholarships to the School of Visual Arts. Artists including Michael Zulli (*Sandman*) and **Matt Wagner** (*Mage*) contributed pieces. Donations to the Foundation can be sent to: Four Color Images, 32 Watts St., New York, NY 10013.

HARRIS COMICS
Mark Millar and **Mark Texeira** will pool their talents for a two-issue, fully painted mini-series about the killer leopard woman Pantha. *Pantha #1* hits in December.

HEAD PRESS PUBLISHING
To raise funds for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, Head Press is publishing ***No Justice, No Piece***, containing stories from Shannon Wheeler (*Too Much Coffee Man*), Len Strazewski and others.

I BOX PUBLISHING
The bimonthly ***Thieves and Kings*** hits in November with issue #20, showcasing the long-awaited reunion of Rubel and Varkias.

IMAGE COMICS
• HOMAGE COMICS
Randy Queen's five-part ***Darkchylde*** mini-series is collected in paperback this December for $14.95. And yep, that means you should keep your eyes peeled for future *Darkchylde* books coming from Homage.
• TOP COW COMICS
Head for cover! December's *The Darkness #11* ships with 11 different variant covers from a bevy of artists including Top Cow regulars and guests like **Dale Keown** (*Pitt*).
• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
No, your eyes aren't playin' tricks on you. December sees the release of the ***Spawn*** *Movie Adaptation* from WildStorm Productions! This 48-page special retails for $4.95....Look for cool cartoon mini-cels this December. These 3 3/4" X 5 1/2" miniature animation cels contain cartoon images on clear plastic with a cardboard frame. At $4.50 a cel, the Flintstones are the first outta the WildStorm gate, with plenty more to come.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Kitchen Sink, which was recently purchased by Disappearing Inc., has appointed famed comic artist **Will Eisner** to its board of directors. With the purchase of the company, Kitchen Sink has begun to reschedule its projects that were previously delayed.

LIAR COMICS
Top Cow's big kahuna **Marc Silvestri** will guest-pencil the cover to *More Than Mortal #3*, coming in December.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS
LNS is gearing up for a major crossover between Razor and **The Crow** in March 1998, entitled *Kill the Pain*. The two-issue story, featuring The Crow's first crossover, will be written by Everette Hartsoe and James O'Barr, creators of the similarly tragic characters.

MARVEL COMICS
November's *Man-Thing #2* is available with a fully painted variant cover by veteran *Man-Thing* artist **Mike Ploog**....The Heroes for Hire take on the **Thunderbolts** in *Heroes for Hire #7*.

MOORDAM COMICS
In December, Moordam launches its first anthology book *Rampage*, featuring 100 pages of 12 new stories, including *Boondoggle*, ***Poe*** and of course, *Mr. Beat*.

PENTHOUSE COMIX
Jason Pearson (*Body Bags*) contributes a story to November's *Penthouse Comix #28*.

SHARKBAIT PRESS
Neither rain, sleet nor snow can keep *Pete the P.O.'d Postal Worker #2* out of stores in December, as Pete delivers a package from the **Unabomber**!

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Dark! #5 hits in December, bringing you 24 pages of addlebrained craziness from Milk and Cheese creator **Evan Dorkin**.

SPIDERWEBART
The Spiderwebart Gallery is open in Morris Plains, N.J., and features art for sale from the likes of **Andy Kubert**, Joe Quesada and The Brothers Hildebrandt. Call 201-292-6857 for information, or check out the "online gallery" at **www.spiderwebart.com**.

TOPPS COMICS
Xena and the Dragon's Teeth is a new three-issue mini-series debuting in December. Issue #1 ships with a variant photo cover.

VIZ COMICS
Viz serves up manga for grown-ups with the release of the monthly anthology ***Pulp***. Each 128-page issue will reprint manga stories with mature content and language. In addition, *Pulp* will also contain monthly columns covering all facets of Japanese entertainment.

WaRP GRAPHICS
Christy Marx (*Sisterhood of Steel*) and **Wendy Pini** begin a 12-issue run on *Elfquest* with #19 in December.

continued next page

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

Amazing things grow in the garden of Wizard World Online. Our newest section gaining rave reviews is Video Game Heaven. It's packed so tightly with reviews, previews, downloads, cheats and codes, you'll be *sure* you've died and gone to heaven. It's found *only* under the "WizExclusives" button on Wizard World.

Ever since we posted our exclusive preview of **Jim Lee**'s *Divine Right*, everyone has been e-mailing us demanding more sneak peeks. This month, we give you an exclusive interview and preview art from **Paul Chadwick**'s upcoming ***Concrete: Strange Armor*** five-issue mini-series. Plus, several fans who check out the interview (posted on November 11) will win great prizes including autographed copies of *Concrete*!

On America Online, Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

NOVEMBER 18 (Tuesday)

- **FABIAN NICIEZA**

The former Marvel writer and current Acclaim Comics president and publisher promises to take fan questions on, well…anything!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

DECEMBER 2 (Tuesday)

- **CHUCK WOJTKIEWICZ**

Former *Justice League of America* and *Troublemakers* artist talks about comics and the upcoming video game he's working on, "Planet Texas." Previews of Wojtkiewicz's art from the Red Storm Entertainment game will be posted for downloads!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

DECEMBER 8 (Monday)

- **BREAKING IN WITH DAVID CAMPITI OF GLASS HOUSE GRAPHICS**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

DECEMBER 16 (Tuesday)

- **MIKE WIERINGO**

The fan-fave Spidey artist will discuss his previous work on *Flash* and his current work on *Sensational Spider-Man*!
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

DECEMBER 20 (Saturday)

- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

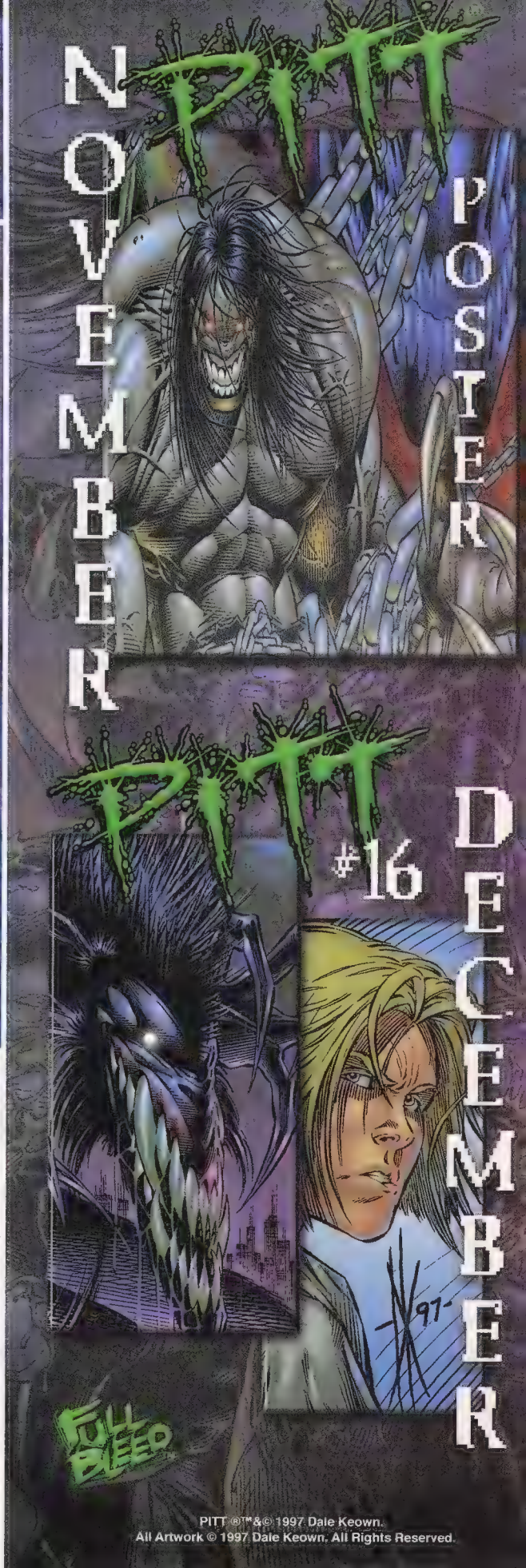
Agreement Reached to Settle Marvel's Bankruptcy Debts

Marvel Entertainment Group, in Chapter 11 (reorganization) bankruptcy since December of 1996, is turning a financial corner.

Marvel and its lenders reached a tentative agreement on September 16 to settle Marvel's bankruptcy debts. Marvel agreed to pay its creditors $385 million in cash, plus Pannini, Marvel's sticker company. Marvel owes a total of $816 million, and a portion of that debt will be restructured to be paid off over time.

The upshot? Marvel will not have to enter Chapter 7 bankruptcy (totally out of business) any time in the foreseeable future. Marvel retains Fleer/SkyBox, its card division, although the future of toy division Toy Biz remains uncertain. Marvel's comics division, however, is business as usual.

"Marvel Comics' publishing schedule has not been affected during bankruptcy," said Publisher **Shirrel Rhoades**, "and we're now confident that we'll be able to steer out of the bankruptcy phase with everything continuing as planned." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*



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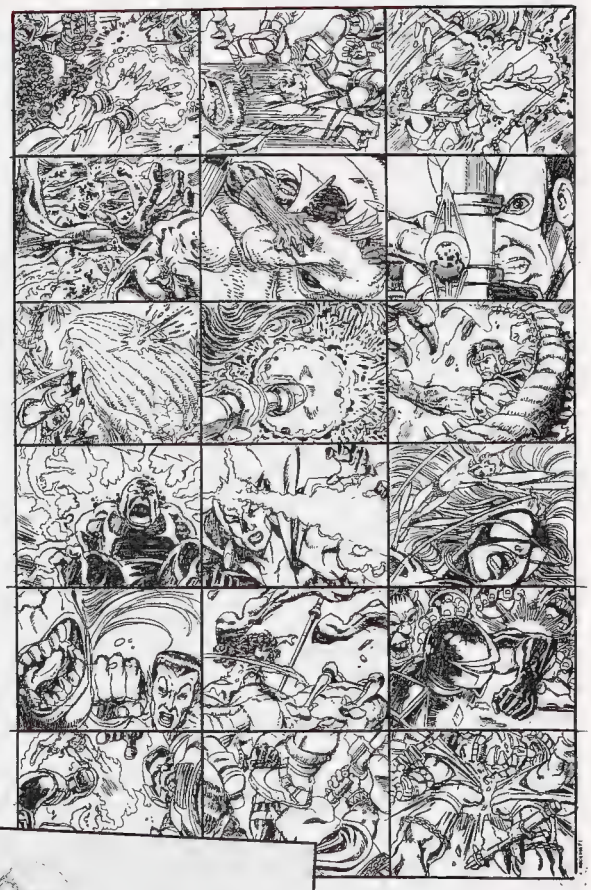
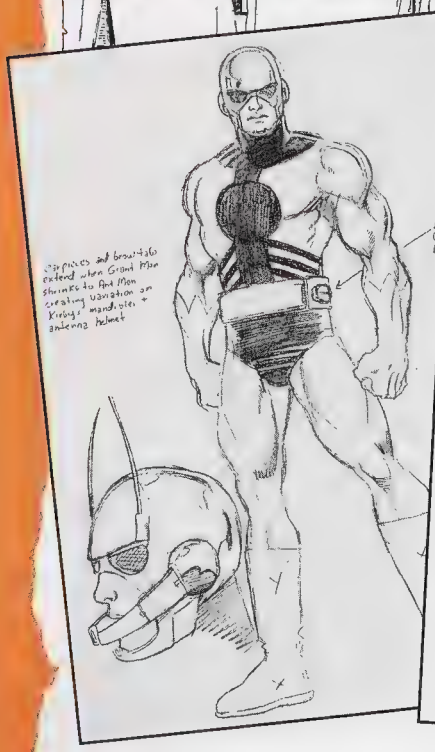
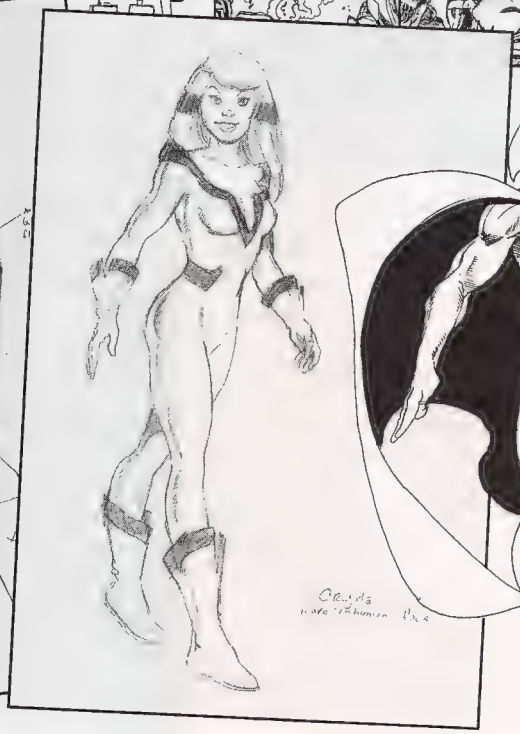
WIZARD SNEAK PREVIEW!

Heroes Return Preview!

The much-awaited Marvel "Heroes Return" books are upon us! ***Avengers* #1** and ***Iron Man* #1** won't be out until next month, but us *Wizard* folks went absolutely ga-ga when we saw this preview art from the first issues. We thought you would too, so take a gander! *Avengers* art is by **George Pérez** and Al Vey, and *Iron Man* art is by **Sean Chen** and Eric Cannon. Excelsior!







Opposite: Two pages from *Avengers* #1 (top). Check out the tweaked retro looks for (from bottom left) Giant Man, Crystal and Vision.
This page: The upgraded Iron Man (above) with a goateed Tony Stark (far right), and selected panels from *Iron Man* #1.

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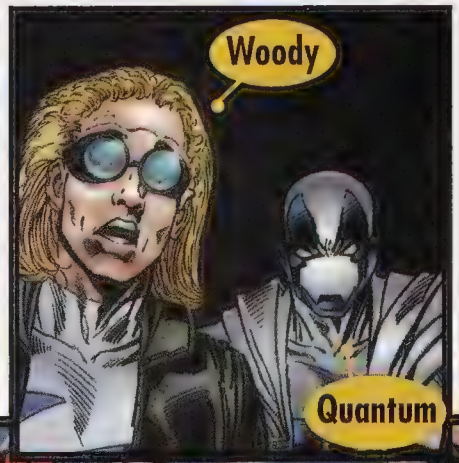
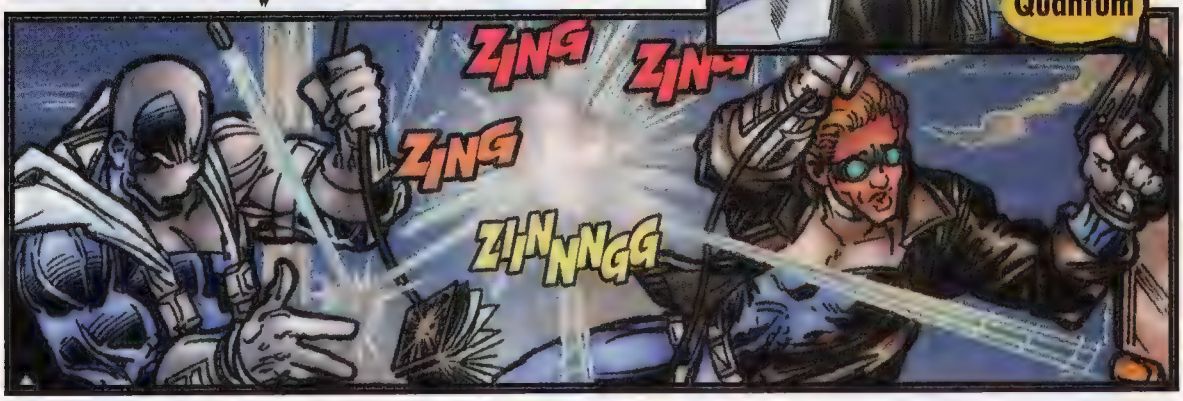
STRIP TEASE

STARRING:

THE WORLD'S *WORST* SUPERHERO TEAM!

QUANTUM AND WOODY





Who?

Quantum and Woody, the world's worst superhero team

What?

"It's a buddy book," says MD Bright, co-creator and penciler of *Quantum and Woody*. "They're best friends who aren't afraid to tell each other how things should be done, usually in the middle of a mission."

After childhood friends Eric Henderson and Woody Van Chelten became teenagers, they suddenly fell out of touch for some 15 years. Reuniting at the funeral of their fathers, who died together under mysterious circumstances, the two set out to investigate their deaths. While exploring their fathers' high-tech lab, Eric and Woody put on a pair of "control bands" and got caught in an experiment that changes matter to energy. The botched experiment gave Eric and Woody strange energy-based powers…and a lot more.

The bands, now fused to their wrists, can't be removed. And if Eric and Woody don't touch the bands together once every 24 hours, both of them will dissipate into formless energy. For better or worse, they're stuck together. So the overly responsible Eric insists on becoming a superhero, calling himself "Quantum," while Woody tags along, calling himself…well…Woody.

What follows is antics you'd expect from the world's worst superhero team. In *Quantum and Woody* #2, the pair scale up a building, trying to bring a mobster to justice. "Woody throws up when he looks down, and Quantum almost gets killed when he gets squirted by bratty kids with waterguns," says Bright. "Quantum is *way* too serious for his own good, and Woody is too casual."

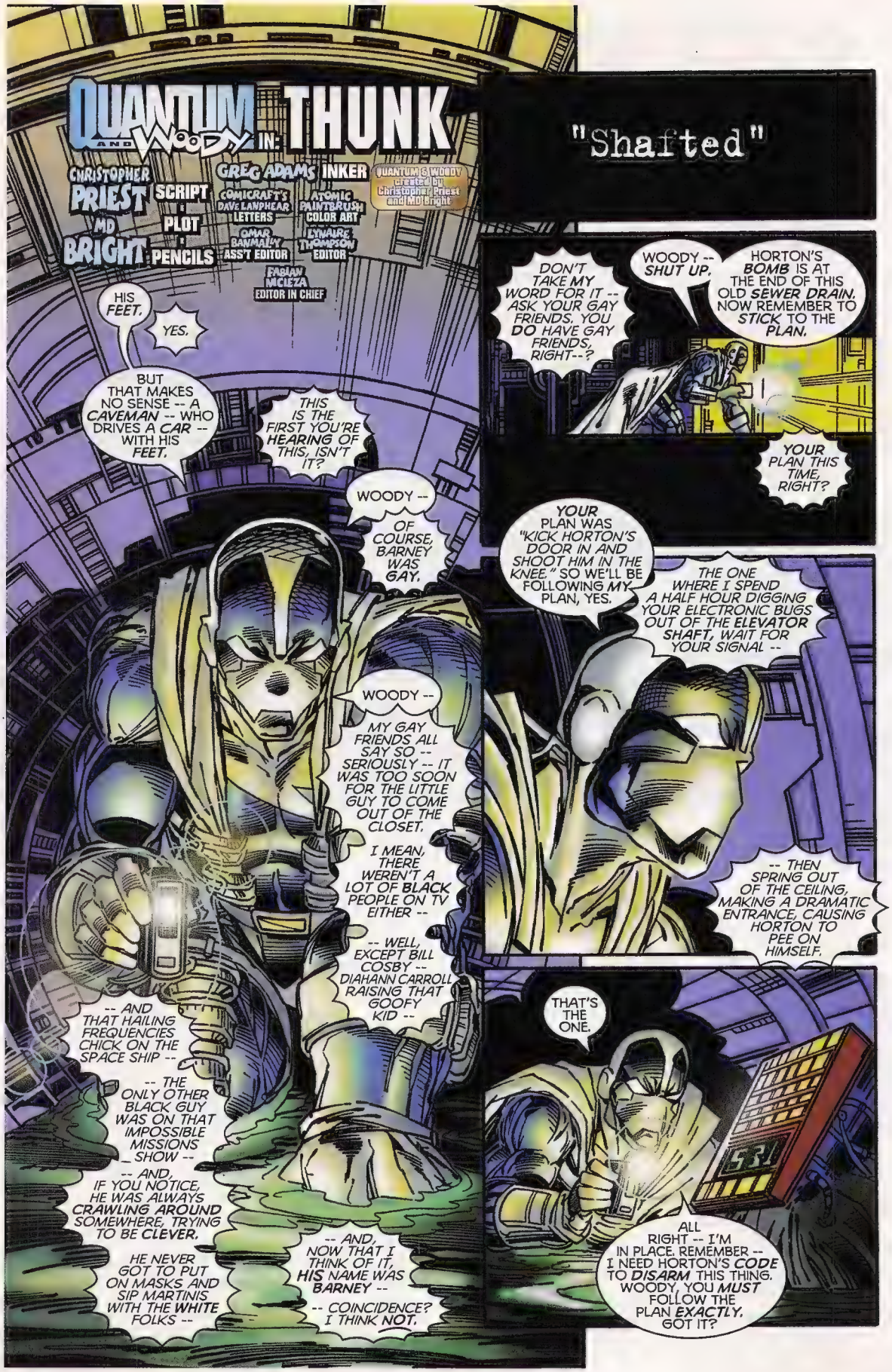
Is Quantum and Woody's relationship like that of Bright and series writer Christopher Priest? "Precisely," Bright says. "Priest and I always bicker and squabble, but in a sarcastic way. There's a lot of us in the book. That's what makes it fun."

Where?

The hapless heroes appear monthly in *Quantum and Woody* from Acclaim Comics. Issue #10 hits the stands in November, and newcomers can get on board by picking up *Quantum and Woody: The Director's Cut*, a November paperback reprinting #1-#4 and featuring some new material.

What's Next?

More of the bizarre, as Quantum and Woody switch bodies in #10-#13. "They both get incredibly annoyed with what they're doing to each other's bodies," says Priest. "And there are some revelations about…physical stuff that they didn't know about each other."



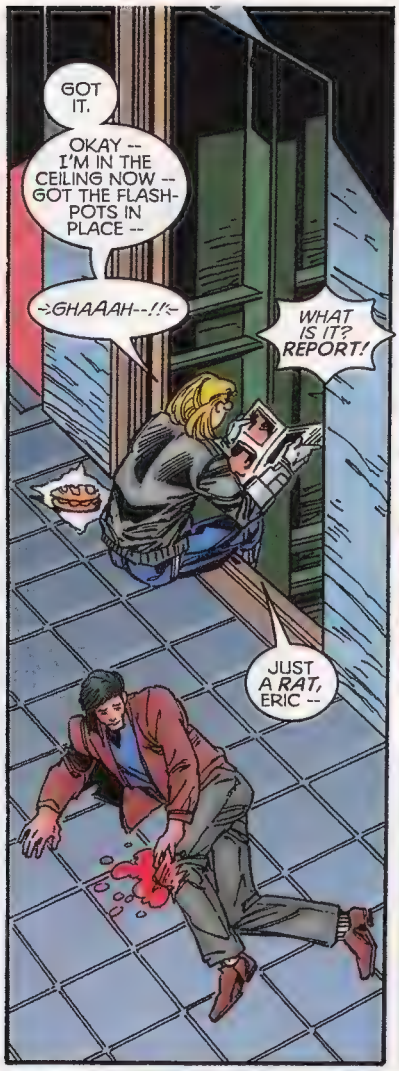
QUANTUM AND WOODY IN: THUNK

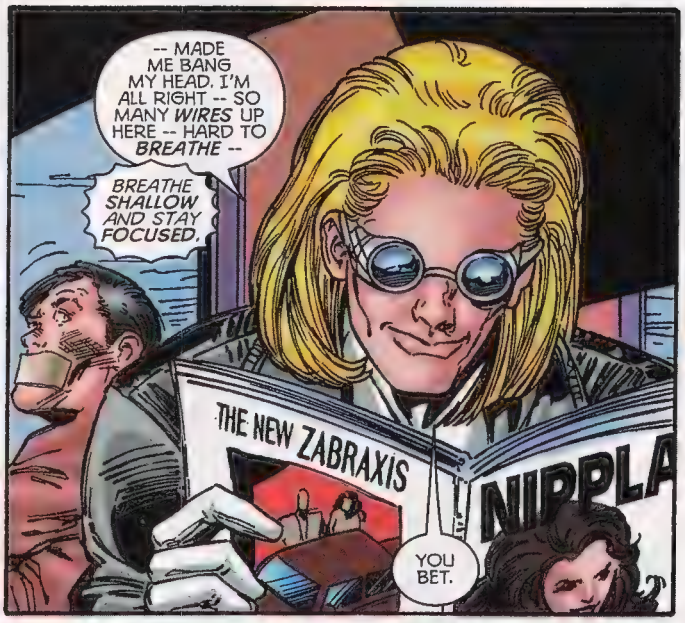
CHRISTOPHER PRIEST SCRIPT
MD BRIGHT PLOT
PENCILS
GREG ADAMS INKER
COMICRAFT'S DAVE LANPHEAR LETTERS
ATOMIC PAINTBRUSH COLOR ART
OMAR BANMALLY ASS'T EDITOR
LYNAIRE THOMPSON EDITOR
FABIAN NICIEZA EDITOR IN CHIEF
QUANTUM & WOODY created by Christopher Priest and MD Bright

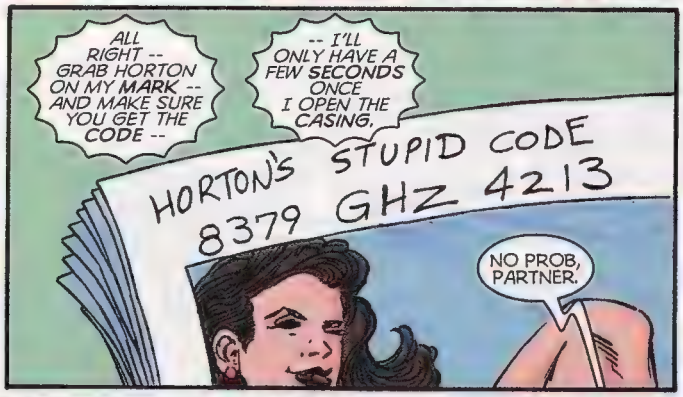
HIS FEET.
YES.
BUT THAT MAKES NO SENSE -- A CAVEMAN -- WHO DRIVES A CAR -- WITH HIS FEET.
THIS IS THE FIRST YOU'RE HEARING OF THIS, ISN'T IT?
WOODY --
OF COURSE, BARNEY WAS GAY.
WOODY --
MY GAY FRIENDS ALL SAY SO -- SERIOUSLY -- IT WAS TOO SOON FOR THE LITTLE GUY TO COME OUT OF THE CLOSET.
I MEAN, THERE WEREN'T A LOT OF BLACK PEOPLE ON TV EITHER --
-- WELL, EXCEPT BILL COSBY -- DIAHANN CARROLL RAISING THAT GOOFY KID --
-- AND THAT HAILING FREQUENCIES CHICK ON THE SPACE SHIP --
-- THE ONLY OTHER BLACK GUY WAS ON THAT IMPOSSIBLE MISSIONS SHOW --
-- AND, IF YOU NOTICE, HE WAS ALWAYS CRAWLING AROUND SOMEWHERE, TRYING TO BE CLEVER.
HE NEVER GOT TO PUT ON MASKS AND SIP MARTINIS WITH THE WHITE FOLKS --
-- AND, NOW THAT I THINK OF IT, HIS NAME WAS BARNEY --
-- COINCIDENCE? I THINK NOT.

"Shafted"

DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT -- ASK YOUR GAY FRIENDS. YOU DO HAVE GAY FRIENDS, RIGHT--?
WOODY -- SHUT UP.
HORTON'S BOMB IS AT THE END OF THIS OLD SEWER DRAIN. NOW REMEMBER TO STICK TO THE PLAN.
YOUR PLAN THIS TIME, RIGHT?
YOUR PLAN WAS "KICK HORTON'S DOOR IN AND SHOOT HIM IN THE KNEE." SO WE'LL BE FOLLOWING MY PLAN, YES.
THE ONE WHERE I SPEND A HALF HOUR DIGGING YOUR ELECTRONIC BUGS OUT OF THE ELEVATOR SHAFT, WAIT FOR YOUR SIGNAL --
-- THEN SPRING OUT OF THE CEILING, MAKING A DRAMATIC ENTRANCE, CAUSING HORTON TO PEE ON HIMSELF.
THAT'S THE ONE.
ALL RIGHT -- I'M IN PLACE. REMEMBER -- I NEED HORTON'S CODE TO DISARM THIS THING. WOODY, YOU MUST FOLLOW THE PLAN EXACTLY. GOT IT?

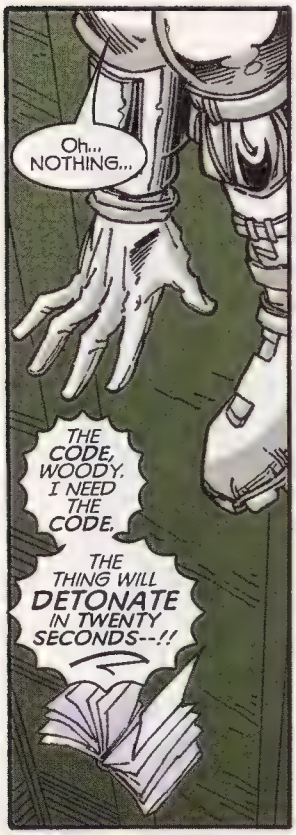

GOT IT.
OKAY -- I'M IN THE CEILING NOW -- GOT THE FLASH-POTS IN PLACE --
-:GHAAAH--!!:-
WHAT IS IT? REPORT!
JUST A RAT, ERIC --

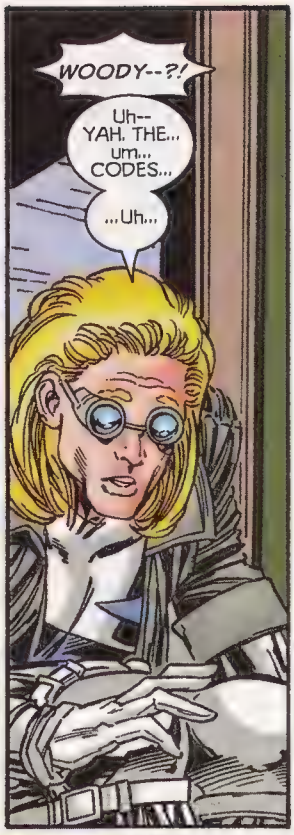

-- MADE ME BANG MY HEAD. I'M ALL RIGHT -- SO MANY WIRES UP HERE -- HARD TO BREATHE --
BREATHE SHALLOW AND STAY FOCUSED.
THE NEW ZABRAXIS
NIPPLA
YOU BET.


ALL RIGHT -- GRAB HORTON ON MY MARK -- AND MAKE SURE YOU GET THE CODE --
-- I'LL ONLY HAVE A FEW SECONDS ONCE I OPEN THE CASING.
HORTON'S STUPID CODE
8379 GHZ 4213
NO PROB, PARTNER.

ALL RIGHT -- EXECUTE.
GIVE IT UP, HORTON -- YOU'VE GOT NOWHERE TO RUN!! NOW WE CAN DO THIS THE HARD WAY, OR --
-:BURRPP--!:-
NIPPLAG
THE NEW ZABRAXIS
--EXCUSE ME --

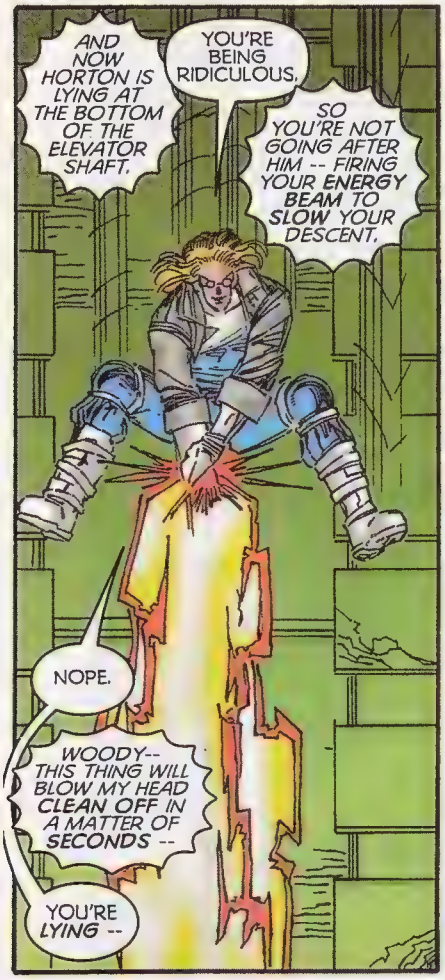
--HUH--?!
WOODY -- REPORT--!
WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?!


Oh... NOTHING...
THE CODE, WOODY. I NEED THE CODE.
THE THING WILL DETONATE IN TWENTY SECONDS--!!

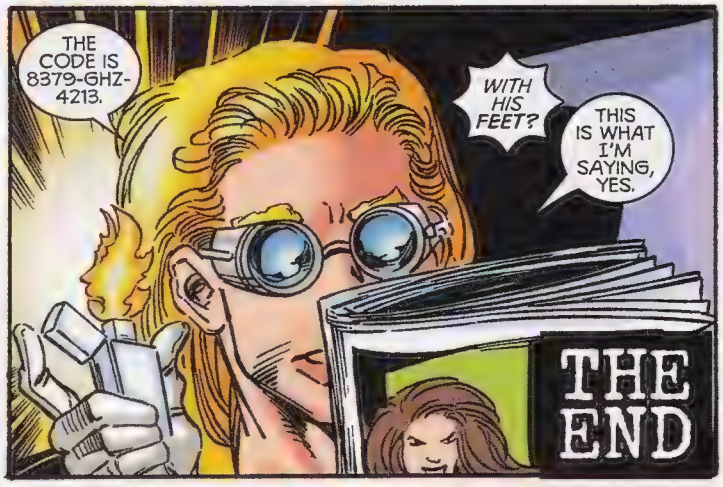

WOODY--?!
Uh-- YAH. THE... um... CODES...
...Uh...

...SIX... uh... EIGHT... NINE... FOUR...
WOODY--
THUNK

--YOU KICKED IN HIS DOOR AND SHOT HIM IN THE KNEE, DIDN'T YOU?
NO.


AND NOW HORTON IS LYING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ELEVATOR SHAFT.
YOU'RE BEING RIDICULOUS.
SO YOU'RE NOT GOING AFTER HIM -- FIRING YOUR ENERGY BEAM TO SLOW YOUR DESCENT.
NOPE.
WOODY-- THIS THING WILL BLOW MY HEAD CLEAN OFF IN A MATTER OF SECONDS --
YOU'RE LYING --

-- I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A BACK-UP PLAN -- LIKE LIQUID NITRO TO SLOW THE DETONATION OR SOMETHING.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
BECAUSE YOUR POTTY TRAINING WENT SO BADLY.


THE CODE IS 8379-GHZ-4213.
WITH HIS FEET?
THIS IS WHAT I'M SAYING, YES.
THE END

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With a roster including (clockwise from top left) *Witchblade, The Darkness, Ascension* and *Arcanum.* Top Cow's risky switch to fantasy heroes has paid off.

Magic Act

BY MATTHEW BRADY

AT TOP COW, IT'S NO MYTH— MAGIC-THEMED BOOKS SUCCEED WHERE SUPERHEROES COULDN'T

What does Top Cow Studios' *Witchblade* have in common with *Cyberforce*? Or *The Darkness* with *Ripclaw*? Give up?

Nothing. Nothing at all.

No longer the home of cybernetically enhanced superheroes, Top Cow now boasts heroes born of magic and mythology. And these heroes are among the hottest around. Fantasy-based titles such as *Witchblade*, *The Darkness* and *Ascension* have replaced superhero fare such as *Cyberforce*, *Ripclaw* and *Codename: Stryke Force*.

Wait a minute. "Magic and mythology"...hot? Top Cow's prime titles are fantasy based...and succeeding? How did this happen?

"Our readers were changing and looking for something new," Top Cow head honcho Marc Silvestri says. "It was a problem that was running through the entire market at the time—people were looking for something other than superheroes to satisfy them. We realized that we had to change our emphasis so we could meet them halfway, and give them books they'd be excited about again."

Like all other Image Comics launches in 1992 and '93, Top Cow's superhero books were smash hits, at least initially. Their success started to fade for two reasons: 1) a superhero glut during the summer of '93 mixed most superhero books into a crowd of anonymity, and 2) the books' shipping schedules were sporadic, further alienating loyal customers. But even when the company got back on track with regular shipping and new superhero titles, fans labeled Top Cow as just another superhero company.

Then came The Change.

"There really wasn't a day where we said, 'It's time to stop doing superheroes and start doing these other comics,'" Silvestri says. "More than anything, *Witchblade*, *The Darkness*, *Arcanum* and all the rest are more of an organic outgrowth of what we'd learned from our more mainline superhero books."

As Silvestri suggests, the shift of Top Cow from a straightforward superhero to a more fantasy-based universe can't be pinpointed to one simple factor—there were many reasons: an aging audience, new creators and an emphasis on making

Top Cow characters accessible to a wider audience all played large roles.

"As we went to conventions, we noticed that the audience was shifting in its average age," Silvestri says, which he offers as playing the biggest role in the change. "We were aware that there were and are fewer and fewer kids at these shows. Our audience was getting older.

"We realized that this audience was very loyal, and had stuck with us through all the crappy years in comics," Silvestri explains. "This is who we needed to service, rather than create and publish countless titles for younger readers who just weren't there in great numbers."

By focusing on an older audience, Top Cow felt that it could go the route of mature comic books. "By mature, we don't mean just sex and violence," Silvestri cautions. "We mean mature relationships, mature personalities, mature characters who interact with each other in mature ways." Don't look for a newspaper reporter swooning in a girlish way for the big hero in this universe.

The first step in this new direction came in June of 1995, when Top Cow launched *Weapon Zero* to an audience that wasn't quite sure what to make of it. The book starred human soldiers snatched throughout different time periods and transformed into warriors for an evil alien race. While it had the Top Cow logo on it, the book wasn't at all like the cybernetically enhanced superheroes in *Cyberforce*. Then again, it was definitely something. With its heavy science fiction influence and a young gun named Joe Benitez tearing up the art, *Weapon Zero* kicked off to great success, which tailed off later in its 13-issue run.

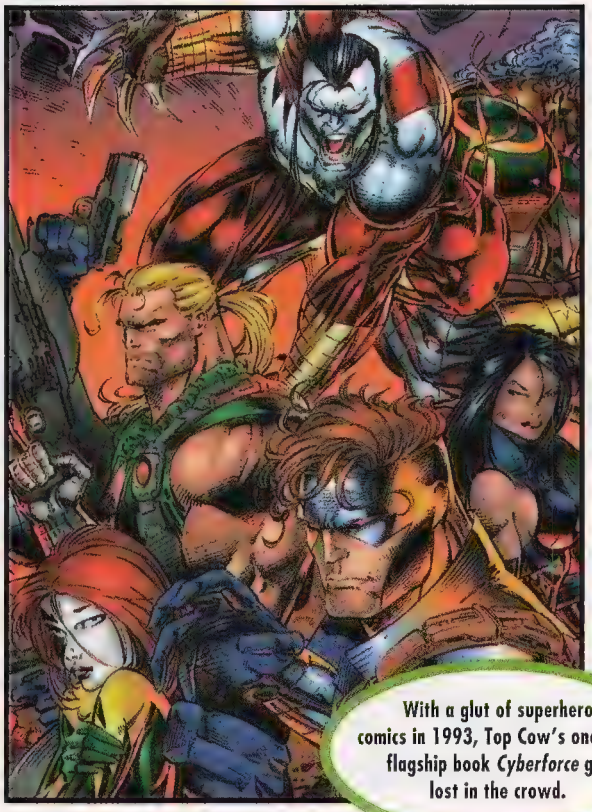
The turning point of Top Cow's new focus however, came in November of 1995, when everything Top Cow Editor-in-Chief David Wohl and Silvestri had been thinking of came together in *Witchblade*, a book that set the comic world on its ear.

Loosely based on concepts popularized by Michael Moorcock in his classic Elric series of books, Wohl and co-creator Brian Haberlin created a mystically powerful gauntlet called the Witchblade that could only be worn by women. The pair decided that tweaking Moorcock's "eternal champion" concept by having Witchblade's power pass through generations was one that was ready to fly in comics, but not in a traditional way.

"When we came up with the concept of *Witchblade*, we were sick of the whole idea of the hero or group fighting to protect a larger group—mutants, humans, whoever," Wohl says. "We wanted to see how these powers affected one person, namely Sara Pezzini possessor of the Witchblade."

Despite the fact that *Witchblade* was flying off of store shelves, it was more than a year later before Top Cow launched another dark-fantasy title, *The Darkness*, which also marked the return of Silvestri to the pencils of a monthly book after more than 18 months.

The wait between *Witchblade*'s launch and *The Darkness* was all part of the plan. "Top Cow's philosophy is that we're a long-term company," Silvestri says. "If you get one concept that works, and just flood the market with more of the same, you're just going to end up cranking out crap. We wanted our readers to get comfortable with *Witchblade* before they had to change gears and get into another title such as *The Darkness*. By the time we brought *The Darkness* out, *Witchblade*'s audience was settled in, and would pick up *The Darkness* in addition to it." *The Darkness* was a pet project at Top Cow, often attempted, but never done to Silvestri's satisfaction. "We'd had the idea that would eventually become *The Darkness* on the back burner for quite a while," Silvestri says. "Probably since around the same time as we were coming up with *Weapon Zero*. We'd offer it to a writer now and then, but we couldn't find anybody who could do it justice until we offered it to Garth Ennis."



With a glut of superhero comics in 1993, Top Cow's one-time flagship book *Cyberforce* got lost in the crowd.

Following this slow-but-steady route of new releases, Top Cow unveiled two more fantasy titles in 1997, each to a huge fan response: *Arcanum*, which pits magical avatars against each other for the fate of the world and *Ascension* released early this fall, where reluctant heroes attempt to halt an extradimensional conflict. Again in both books, the fantasy is there, but classic superheroics aren't.

"Our readers were changing and looking for something... other than superheroes to satisfy them. We realized that we had to change our emphasis so we could meet them halfway."
—Marc Silvestri

Top Cow also needed new blood to infuse its new focus. "As we brought more people in, we all came in with our own takes on what we wanted to do," Wohl says. "So we started trying to come up with new ideas that we wanted to get out there. That was when we came up with *Weapon Zero*, and we also laid down some initial ideas of what would later become *The Darkness*."

"We allowed the new guys to veer in whatever direction they preferred to go in with our ongoing titles," Silvestri says. "But it was becoming really obvious that if we wanted these people to work to their strengths, they'd have

to move to something other than superheroes."

Names of Top Cow artists and writers added to the mix read like a who's who among today's hottest creators: Ennis, who revamped and shaped the world of *The Darkness*; Michael Turner, whose art style visual style paved the way for Top Cow's fantasy "look"; Wohl, a former Marvel editor now steering the Top Cow Universe as its editor-in-chief and co-writer of *Witchblade*; and Christina Z., *Witchblade*'s other hotshot co-writer, who adds a more human perspective to the character with capabilities of mass destruction.

The success of *Witchblade* (shown in front) sparked *The Darkness*, which ended Silvestri's 18-month sabbatical.

Throughout all of the new and upcoming Top Cow books, one theme runs constant: there are no superhero conventions anywhere. No one has a cool codename, and main characters are more likely to wear an Armani or Versace outfit than a skintight costume. Sure, the books are called *Witchblade* and *The Darkness*, but as Wohl quickly points out, those are the names of the powers, not the people. "I never envisioned Sara in a regular costume," Wohl says. "She'd have something that sort of looked like a costume, just because the Witchblade would do that. She should never have a flashy, superhero-type costume."

Keeping comic booky codenames as well as costumes out of the books is a strategy to make Top Cow's characters more accessible to a wide audience, namely the folks who watch television and go to the movies. With a "Witchblade" TV series set to debut next fall, and *Darkness* and *Weapon Zero* movies in the works, Silvestri explains that much of the comic book feeling of characters and situations has to be toned down for a broader audience.

"A lot of the mainstream audience out there may be turned off by a guy running around in a cape and wearing his underwear, which is something that's completely acceptable to the comics audience," Silvestri explains. "To reach out to the mainstream audience, you have to have these characters anchored in more reality than a typical comic book."

"More reality" to Silvestri means things like NYPD cop Sara Pezzini must struggle to control and understand the Witchblade, and has trouble at her job; womanizer Jackie Estacado must face the fact that if he has sex, his Darkness power will kill him; *Arcanum*'s Ming Chang must make a choice to use her vast magical powers for good or evil and *Ascension*'s Lucien must constantly struggle with his own inner demons.

Says Silvestri, "That's one of the key themes we return to at Top Cow—these people do have lives that they have to deal with, as well as their powers."

One final element that factored into Top Cow's shift over the years is the simple fact that, as well as the audience, Silvestri and Wohl are growing up and finding that things that looked cool to 20-something eyes lose a bit of their sparkle when viewed by 30-something eyes. "What we thought was good and cool in 1991 compared with what we think is cool now is totally different," Wohl says. "Our tastes have widened a lot, and we probably like a lot less mainstream material than people probably realize."

Something that came along with that maturing over the years, Wohl admits, was an openness to other creators' visions. "It's all about open-mindedness," Wohl says. "When you're willing to realize that your personal vision isn't necessarily the best, you become much more accepting of what other people have to offer."

To illustrate this, Wohl cites *The Darkness* concept. Years in the making, it was something that he and Silvestri hashed out, and series writer Ennis trashed at first glance. "It was sort of shocking at first," Wohl says. "Here's something you've created, and then somebody else comes in and puts their own, completely different spin on it, which in the end was probably the best thing that could've happened. You just learn to sit back and let others do their stuff. After all, their ideas may be just as good or better than yours."

Top Cow's canceled sci-fi comic *Weapon Zero* is being retooled for a relaunch.

The recent changes at Top Cow are not without casualties, however. Both *Cyberforce* and *Weapon Zero* are both being put on hiatus awaiting a later relaunch, pending retooling and revitalization, as their readers have moved on to the more fantasy-based titles.

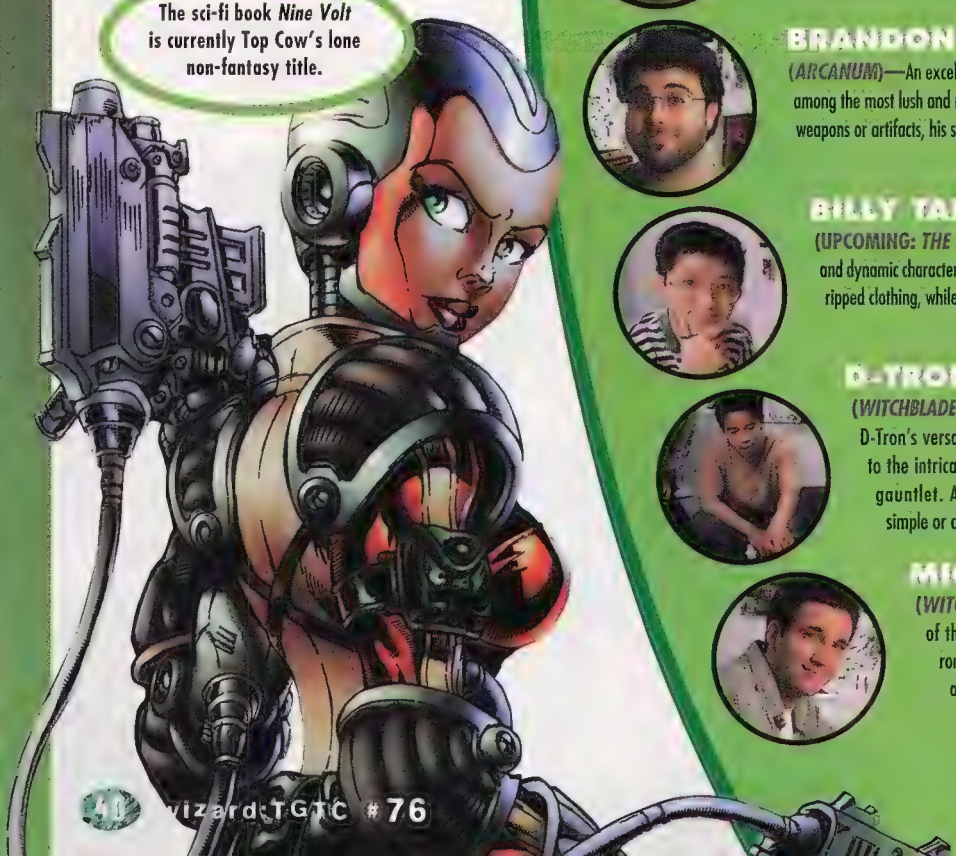
Of the two books, Silvestri found the cancellation of *Cyberforce*, Top Cow's one-time flagship title, particularly hard to swallow. "*Cyberforce* is my baby, and it's what I started with at Image," Silvestri said. "The concept is sound, and will in essence remain the same with its eventual relaunch, but *Cyberforce* is a throwback to an earlier era of comics, and just wasn't clicking as it once used to."

Looking at the future of Top Cow, both Silvestri and Wohl are quick to point out that despite their success with *Witchblade* and *The Darkness*, which operate in the same world, new titles coming from Top Cow won't all fit neatly into the power structure that's been hinted at in the two books. Diversity is still the name of the game.

"You're deluding yourself if you think the next hot book will be a reworked version of the last hit book," Wohl says. "We're not going to do just another book about a dark guy who says 'Bloody Hell!' a lot. We always want to be ahead of the curve, and we know now that you need other people's input in order to do that."

Silvestri agrees. "You have to be a lot more careful when you make decisions about new books these days," he says. "We're not going to be pigeonholed with a certain type of book. The one thing that will be similar in all our future books is that the quality and great ideas will be there. We know from experience that if the books have that, they'll have an audience as well." W

North Carolina-based writer/superhero Matthew Brady has also been put on hiatus by Top Cow. He is awaiting a "retooled concept for the '90s."

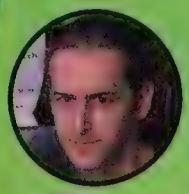


The sci-fi book *Nine Volt* is currently Top Cow's lone non-fantasy title.

Young Guns

If Top Cow Studios can attribute its success to something other than its fantasy-based characters, it's the wealth of young talent it has cultivated.

Practically every book it publishes sports work done by its "young guns" and, in some cases, the creators have proven worthy of tackling their own books. Here's a rundown of Top Cow's "young guns" and what makes their talent shine.



BATT

(*ASCENSION, THE DARKNESS*)—The best inker over Marc Silvestri's pencils, Batt's ink work is extremely detail-oriented, yet leaves the art wide open for Top Cow's exceptional coloring crew.

JOE BENITEZ

(*WEAPON ZERO*)—Benitez is adept at drawing high-tech, manga-esque sci-fi mechanisms like battle armor and spacecrafts. In all, he's a breath of fresh air to the American sci-fi comic genre.

ANTHONY CHUN

(*NINE VOLT*)—The youngest of Top Cow's newbies at 25, Chun is also hip to drawing cool sci-fi battle armor and gadgets, but his true strength lies in his expressive characters.

DAVID FINCH

(*ASCENSION*)—With an admitted Silvestri influence, Finch goes heavy on the line-work for a dark, Gothic style. Look for his talent to establish a dark eerie mood, though, to distinguish him from his mentor.

BRANDON PETERSON

(*ARCANUM*)—An excellent storyteller, Peterson's magical world in *Arcanum* is among the most lush and mythical of all Top Cow's titles. Whether it be costumes, weapons or artifacts, his style is just neat to look at.

BILLY TAN

(UPCOMING: *THE SPIRIT OF THE TAO*)—Tan excels at drawing fluid and dynamic character poses. And somehow he manages to give his characters ripped clothing, while making 'em look chic. Go figure.

D-TRON

(*WITCHBLADE*)—Besides having one of the hippest names in comics, D-Tron's versatile ink style can range from splotchy black lines to the intricacies of the nooks and crannies of the Witchblade gauntlet. And he pulls it off without the art looking too simple or cluttered.

MICHAEL TURNER

(*WITCHBLADE*)—Okay, we all know Turner draws some of the sexiest female characters in comics. But it's his romantic penciling style that gives practically every panel a panache not often seen in comics. Whether it be expensive furniture, marble tiling or a bouquet of red roses, his eye for those subtle details makes *Witchblade* a visual treat. ■ *John B. Lacey*

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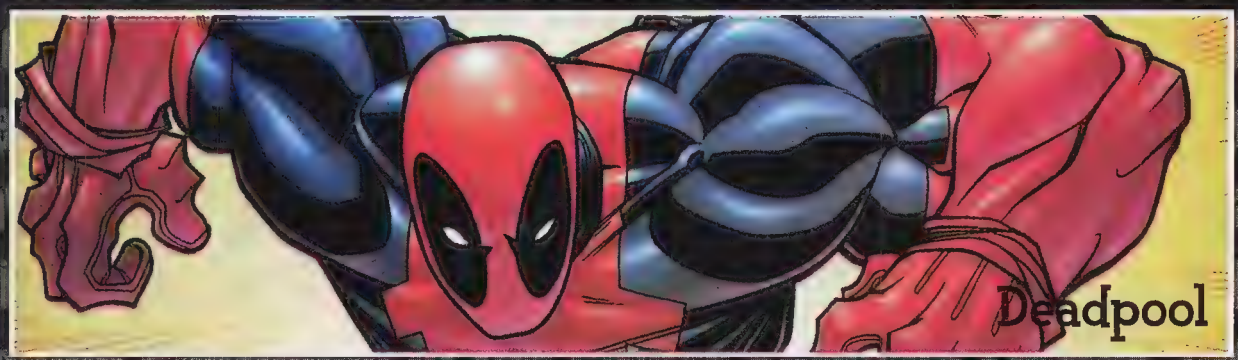
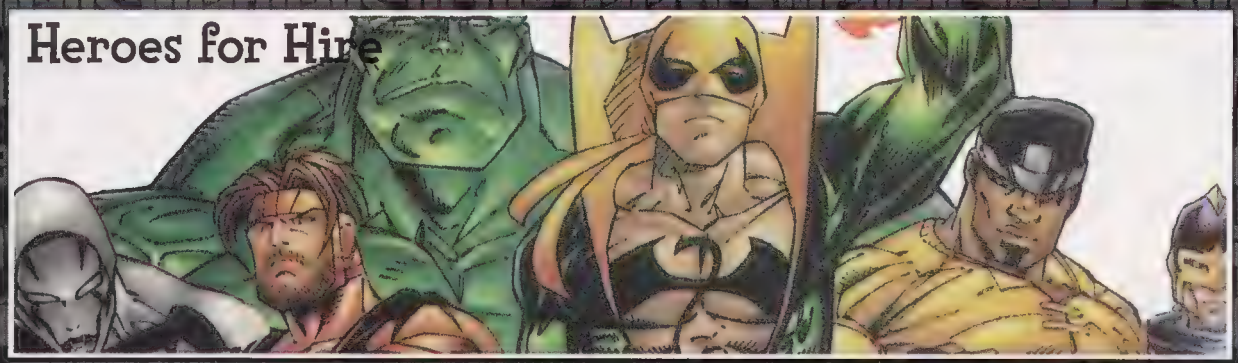
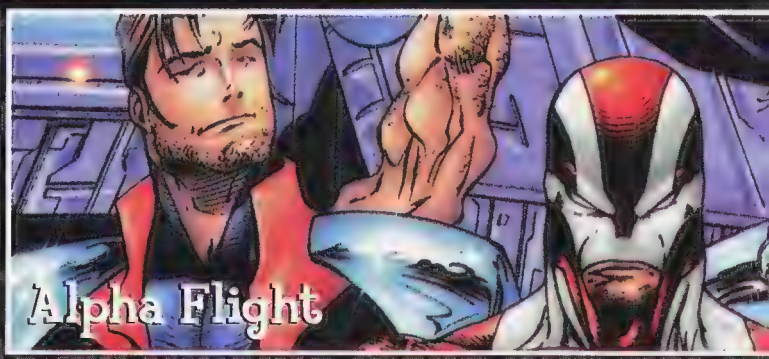
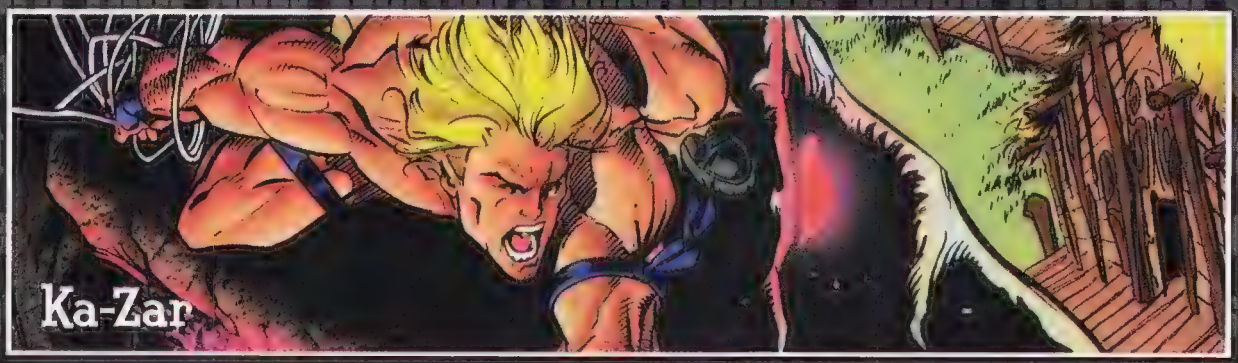
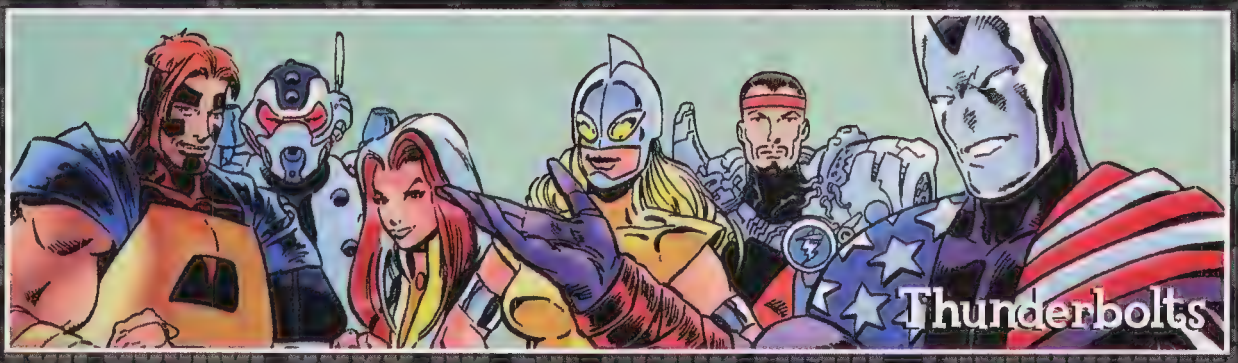




By Scott Brick







Title Wave

A slew of risky new releases successfully fills a void created by Marvel's 'dead' heroes

Yes, Marvel's heroes *have* returned. Only you won't find any of them on the Avengers or Fantastic Four's rosters. No, Marvel's current smash sensations are composed of formerly canceled, completely untested or third-string heroes. Heck, one superteam is made up entirely of supervillains.

Enter Marvel's unlikely A-list titles: *Ka-Zar*, *Alpha Flight*, *Thunderbolts*, *Deadpool* and *Heroes for Hire*. How did these underdogs wind up as Marvel's "New Wave" of all-stars? And why have they brought Marvel so much success in '97?

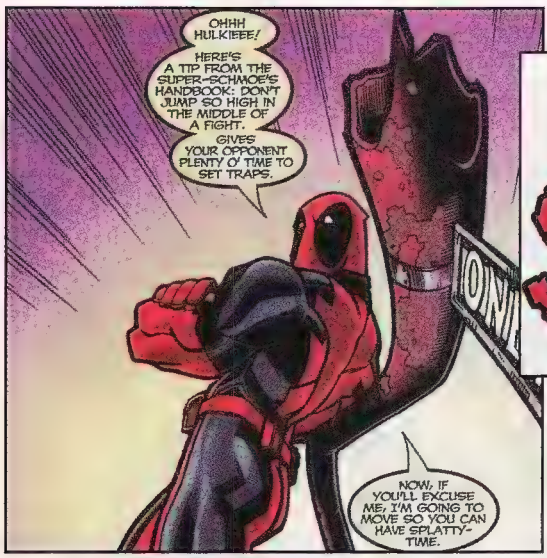
Chalk it up to timing and quality. The 1996 epic "Onslaught" storyline removed Marvel's biggest heroes from its core universe, immediately creating a void for other titles to fill. Some of the biggest talents in the industry stepped forward to fill this void, bringing with them a slew of characters who were far more obscure than the big guns they needed to replace, but had no less potential. By playing off the recognition factor of these old characters and adding modern perspectives, Marvel created successful books that have both a retro feel and a distinct '90s identity, a combination that's been very popular with fans.

THE SEEDS FOR MARVEL'S 1997 SUCCESS were actually planted in '96, when the Fantastic Four and Avengers departed the Marvel Universe during *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*. The heroes didn't die, of course—they just moved into a pocket universe—but for all intents and purposes, the Marvel Universe was suddenly a whole lot emptier. For the first time in history, a comic book company had scooped out the heart and soul and core of its books, creating a gap other heroes needed to fill. "There'd never been a superhero universe in that sort of situation," says *Thunderbolts* writer Kurt Busiek. "What opportunities would there be? Marvel had this hole in their universe, but they didn't want to just go on like nothing had happened. They wanted to juice up the books that were there and see what they could do in terms of new books." In July of 1996, Marvel held a creators' conference to discuss the post-*Onslaught* Marvel Universe, determining how to take advantage of the heroes' apparent deaths to best impact the rest of its product line.

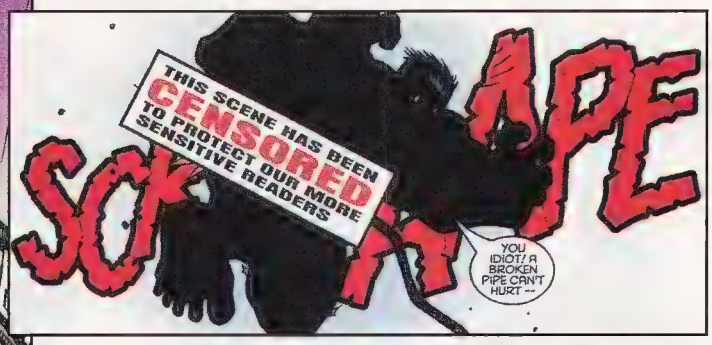
For the denizens of Marvel's Earth, having a world without heroes could be disastrous. After all, consider how many supervillains there are running around New York alone. How could Marvel, in good conscience, leave the citizens unprotected? For Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras, that meant new teams had to step forward and take up some of the superhero slack. "'Heroes Reborn' certainly created a dramatic background to launch new teams and new concepts," says Harras. "It gave us a reason for some of these new characters to come aboard, which is always great when you have some backstory that gives credibility to a launch. So in that sense, the splitting apart of the Marvel Universe worked to our benefit, dramatically."

> **"We're trying to put out new releases that have their own voice, that have something to say."**
>
> —Thunderbolts *editor Tom Brevoort*

Realizing there was a unique creative atmosphere at hand, many of the industry's top professionals began pitching books that, to put it mildly, hadn't enjoyed a tremendous amount of success their first—or second—time around. Enter fan-favorites Mark Waid and Andy Kubert on *Ka-Zar*, a Tarzan wannabe who rode around the Savage Land on dinosaurs. *Astro City* creator Kurt Busiek and longtime Spidey artist Mark Bagley created



The comedy of* Deadpool *is key to its success.



"I think at one point the fans felt Marvel was putting books out just to put books out."

—Heroes for Hire writer John Ostrander

Thunderbolts, starring former Avengers foes, the Masters of Evil, posing as heroes. New *Uncanny X-Men* writer Steven T. Seagle and former WildStorm artist Scott Clark reinvented *Alpha Flight*, Marvel's old team of Canadian superheroes. Hot newcomer Joe Kelly launched *Deadpool*, an occasionally heroic mercenary from the pages of *New Mutants*, while John Ostrander and young gun Pascual Ferry dusted off *Heroes for Hire*, reuniting the '70s partnership of Power Man and Iron Fist.

Given the number of failed series those characters had between them, sales were anything but guaranteed. For Ostrander, writer on *Heroes for Hire*, success meant more than just veteran characters and popular talent; there needed to be real quality, as well. "If there's one thing that's gotten the fan's reaction," says Ostrander, "it's that there's quality to all the books. Whether you think it was justified or not, I think at one point the fans felt Marvel was putting books out just to put books out. I think now they're seeing there's a little more care in terms of making sure the quality's in the product."

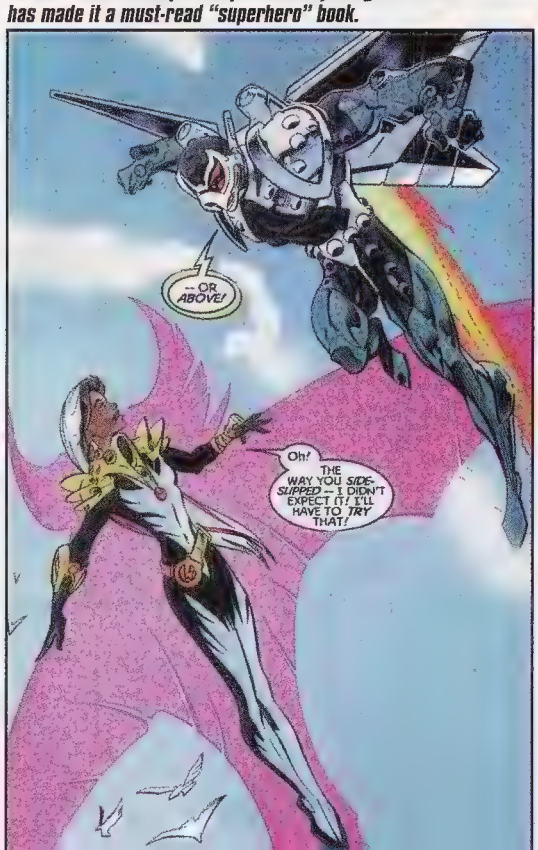
ON TOP OF QUALITY, Marvel needed something modern and unique to add to its mixture of old characters. Seagle calls DC's *Starman* a prime example of this modern/old combination. "It [stars] a new character, but I don't think it would have done as well if it weren't called *Starman* and it didn't have a link to that legacy [dating back to the 1940s]. I think the same thing's true at Marvel." Seagle reworked *Alpha Flight* to play off modern conspiracy and paranoia themes by writing the book's narration in the second person—which uses the word "you" to make it seem as if the reader is part of the story. "It's a different voice that puts into question everything you read," according to Seagle. "It raises a lot more doubt than first- or third-person narration would." As a result of this pulp-like quality, *Alpha Flight* now has a nostalgic feel, yet moves beyond the standard retro scenario by maintaining a contemporary perspective.

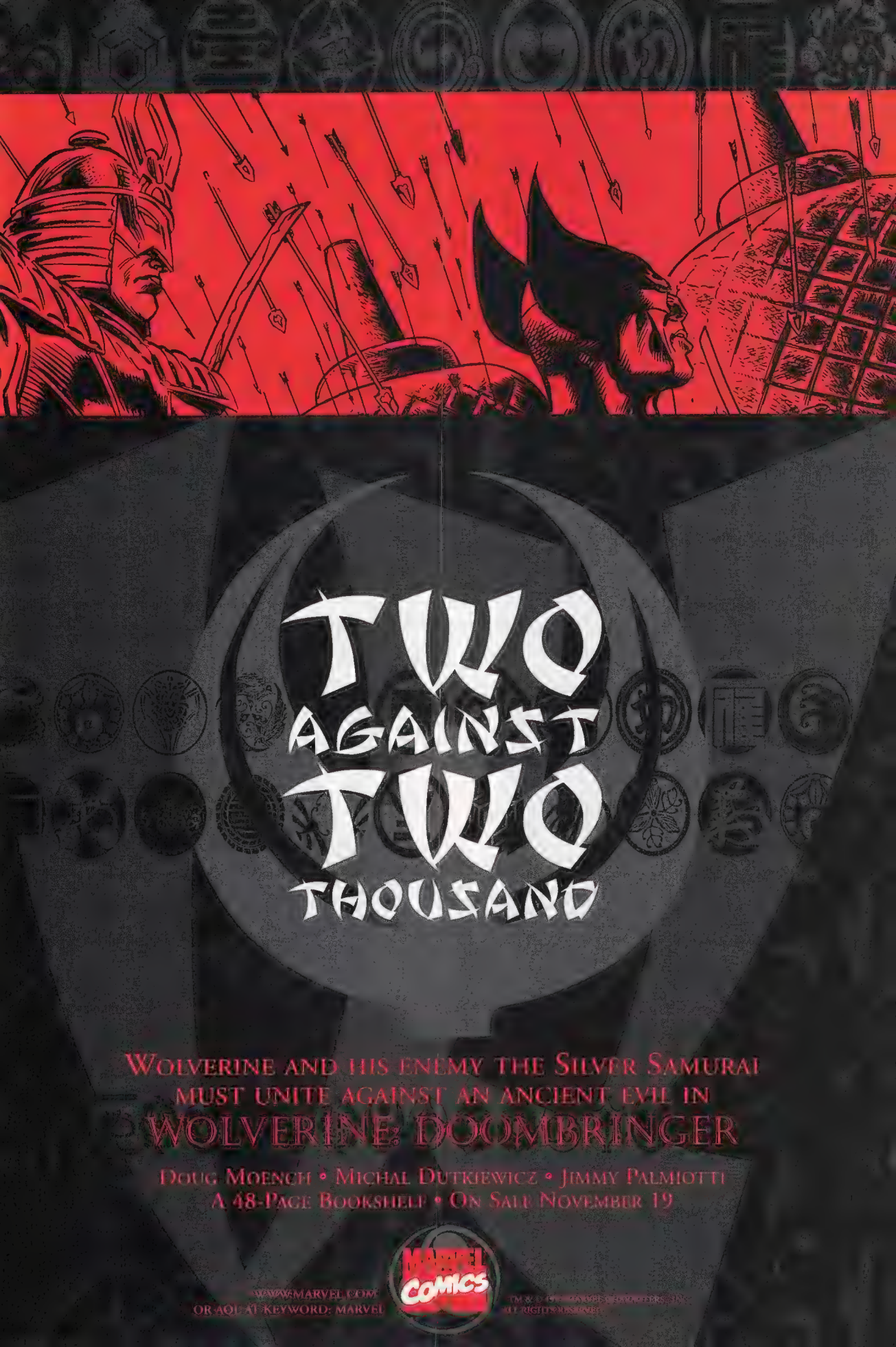
Heroes for Hire resurrected the Power Man/Iron Fist partnership in an entirely new light: They now belong to a superhero corporation seemingly motivated by money rather than a desire to help mankind. For series editor Mark Bernardo, this twist is what separates the pair's book from its previous incarnations. "I like to think it's nostalgia mixed with the thought, 'How can we make this cool for today?'" says Bernardo. "This is just a little bit different because these are characters who take money for their services, which could and most likely will lead to some controversial confrontations with other heroes."

Similarly, *Ka-Zar* added a contemporary twist to a venerable character by relocating the former savage in our own modern world, and making him a family man along the way. "In my case, I just broke it down to what interested me most about the character," asserts *Ka-Zar* writer Waid. "What interested me most was the dynamic between [Ka-Zar's] wife and his new child, and how he feels about being a father. That's something I could find a little more relatable." Some of the character's sillier elements have been jettisoned. "It's very hard to cheer on a guy who speaks in fractured sentences and wears a loinskin," says *Ka-Zar* editor Matt Idelson. "I just don't think it's life. I mean, he had fur booties!"

For *Deadpool*, the secret to success meant playing off the character's relationship to the X-Men while at the same time keeping him distinctly lighter in tone. Kelly, *Deadpool*'s writer, believes the book has all the advantages of being an X-book, but with the added bonuses of comedy and much racier material. "I hear so many times, 'It's a comic book that's actually comic,'" he says. "There's been a lot of gloom and doom and super-darkness with the '80s trend. I think this is one of the first times in a long time they're seeing something different in a mainstream book. He's also a fun, antihero character, so that's a big push. We get away with a lot more stuff, it's a little more *risqué*, and we get

***Thunderbolts'* concept of supervillains posing as heroes has made it a must-read "superhero" book.**

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Revival of the Fittest

Think the Marvel well of revivals is tapped out? No way. The beat goes on, with a load of new takes on old characters. With *Alpha Flight, Heroes for Hire, Ka-Zar, Man-Thing* and a *Moon Knight* mini-series already out, here's a sneak peek at more revived Marvel series you might be seeing soon:

THOR

The biggest revival of all isn't on the schedule yet, but John Romita Jr. (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*) is chomping at the bit to find a writer and start on Marvel's Thunder God.

NEW WARRIORS

It won't appear until 1999, but sources say that Marvel desperately wants to bring this popular teen team back.

MICROVERSE

Two proposals on the heroes from the Microverse are on Marvel editors' desks, say sources inside Marvel, including one from Shawn Bury (*Black Ops*) and one from the X-Men team of Joe Kelly and Steven T. Seagle.

BLADE

A Blade project of some sort will be out to take advantage of the release of Wesley Snipes' "Blade" movie, slated for February. Don McGregor, a Marvel horror vet of the '70s, will write.

IRON FIST

Dan Jurgens (*Superman*) is looking to go swimming in the Marvel pool again and is developing a mini-series on this Heroes for Hire member.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Marvel is taking pitches from creators who want to tackle the mutant duo.

INHUMANS

Many creators are currently pitching Marvel to tackle Black Bolt, Medusa and crew.

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

The 40th-century superhero team is being courted by many creators hoping to write the series.

KILLRAVEN

Alan Davis (*Fantastic Four*) is an admitted longtime fan of the future warrior who leads the Earthly resistance to a Martian invasion. He's rumored to be writing and drawing a 1998 Killraven project.

SEEKER 3000

Exactly *one* issue of this spacefaring saga appeared in an issue of *Marvel Premiere* in the '70s, but it's being developed as a new mini-series in 1998. ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

to appeal to all those bad impulses we're supposed to repress. Somebody who's not squeaky-clean seems to ring truer to the kids."

Of all the '97 releases, *Thunderbolts* best capitalized on the gap in the Marvel Universe by reworking the old Masters of Evil into a pseudo-superteam. These "heroes" have been lulling the citizens of Marvel's New York City into a false sense of security, and are ready to pounce when the masses least expect it. Busiek managed to shock the industry when he revealed the team's true identity at the end of issue #1. "The best thing you can have someone say after they've read the first issue of a new series is 'Oh, man, did you *see* that?' and we got a lot of that." However, *Thunderbolts* is far more than just surprise endings and evil characters; it also poses the question, "Can even hardened criminals change their behavior?"

Thunderbolts editor Tom Brevoort is quick to point out that Marvel's '97 releases aren't just different from their previous incarnations, but are also distinct from anything else on the stands today. "We're trying to put out new releases that don't duplicate stuff we've already got," asserts Brevoort, "that have their own voice, that have something to say, that fill a niche that's otherwise been unfilled. The days when we did *Avengers* and *Avengers West Coast* and *Solo Avengers* and *Avengers-in-Training* and *Avengers on the Beach* and whatnot, that's not really the acclimation we're going for at this point."

SO FAR, MARVEL'S "NEW WAVE" has succeeded in the void created by "Heroes Reborn," but what happens when the heroes come back? Marvel's November relaunch of its core titles will tend to overshadow everything else, at least according to Idelson. "It'll impact [the '97 releases] for sure, because it'll eclipse them in terms of what kind of press coverage there is and what people are thinking about."

With the New Wave about to be overshadowed by the reunification of the Marvel Universe, the question for Marvel is whether its newest books can survive in 1998. Will Marvel's new characters be necessary after its legendary heroes return?

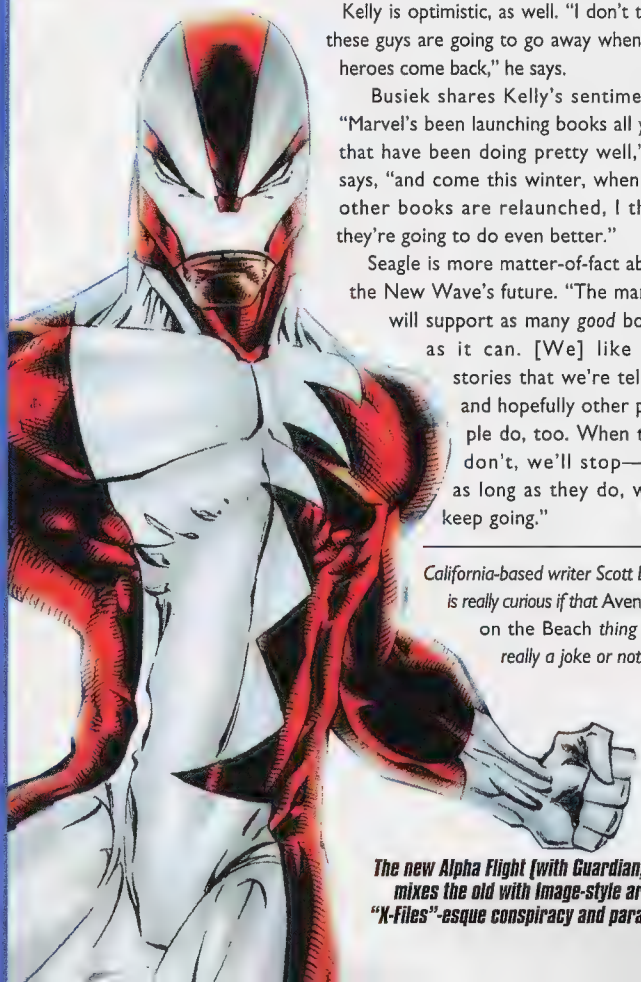
Actually, Marvel is not giving up on the New Wave's chances for success. Plans for its characters to appear in two of the core titles, *Fantastic Four* and *Avengers*, more than a year after "Heroes Return" makes the New Wave's future look promising.

Kelly is optimistic, as well. "I don't think these guys are going to go away when the heroes come back," he says.

Busiek shares Kelly's sentiments. "Marvel's been launching books all year that have been doing pretty well," he says, "and come this winter, when the other books are relaunched, I think they're going to do even better."

Seagle is more matter-of-fact about the New Wave's future. "The market will support as many *good* books as it can. [We] like the stories that we're telling, and hopefully other people do, too. When they don't, we'll stop—but as long as they do, we'll keep going." W

California-based writer Scott Brick is really curious if that Avengers on the Beach *thing was really a joke or not.*



The new Alpha Flight (with Guardian, left) mixes the old with Image-style art and "X-Files"-esque conspiracy and paranoia.

Captain America
Iron Man
The Avengers
The Fantastic Four ... The World's Greatest Heroes were gone
in an Onslaught of terror and tragedy.
Our lives were shattered.
We bowed our heads
wept our tears
and hoped that perhaps
our proud dead champions were in a better place.
How could we know they were still alive,
breaking free of a world that was
about to be cast into oblivion?

HEROES RETURN
Leaving a dying reality behind them,
they threw themselves out into the void
in hopes of returning to save a world
they no longer had memories of.
But even this almost fabled return would be darkened
by the shadow of evil
as one among them
conspired against the others.

had become a group of
super-powered individuals
unable to get along
with each other.

Captain America #1
MARK WAID • RON GARNEY
NOVEMBER
the AVENGERS #1
KURT BUSIEK • GEORGE PÉREZ
DECEMBER
Fantastic Four #1
SCOTT LOBDELL • ALAN DAVIS
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...BUT WHO DID HE BETRAY IN HIS OWN TIME?
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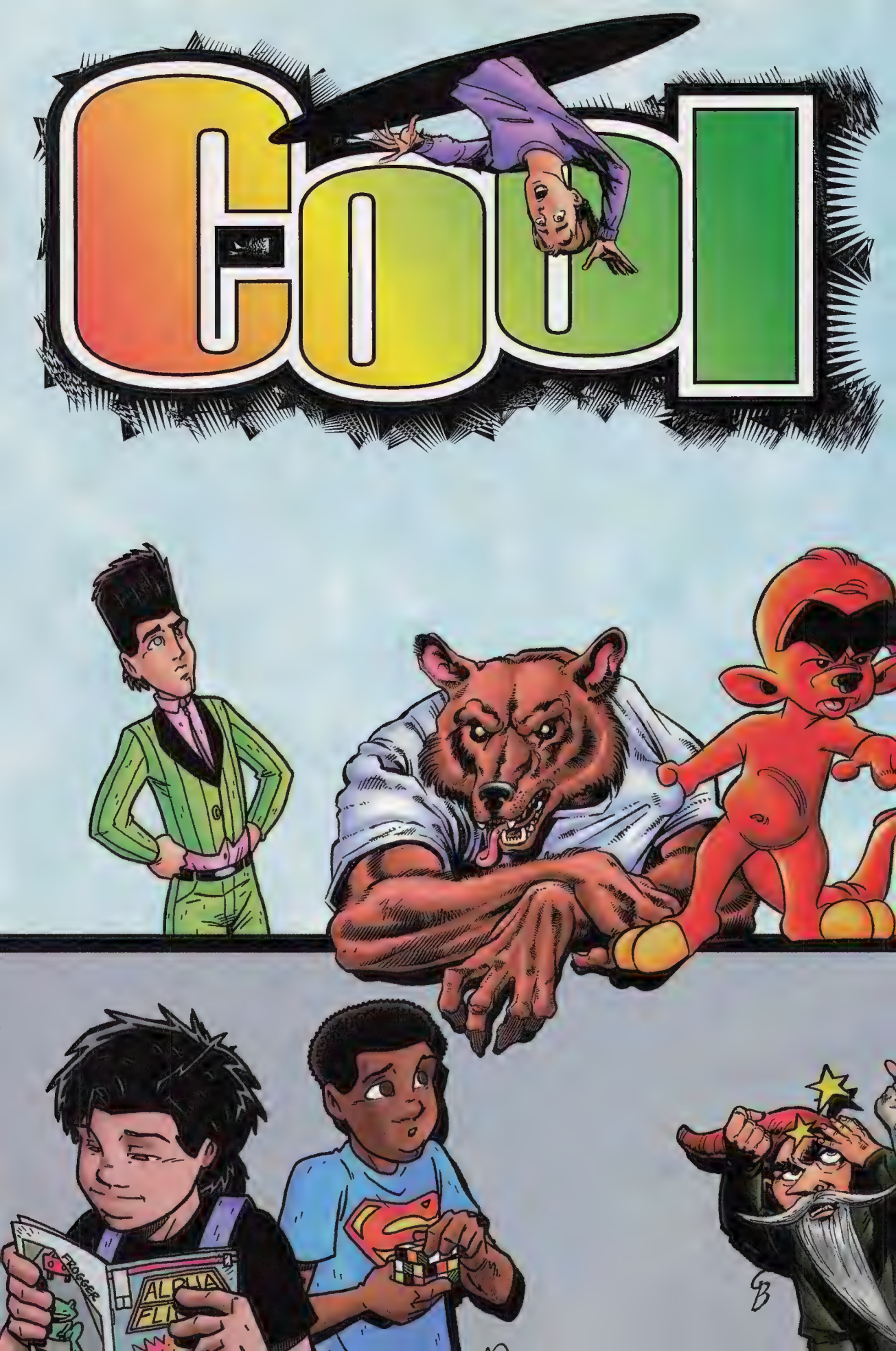
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Coventry is a captivating mix of the urban and mystical. *Lost Stories* is an enchanting tale of a teenager lost in a fabulous new world. *The Copybook Tales* reads like "Seinfeld," but with comic fanboys.

So take a chance. Seek out these small-press books. Trust us, you won't be sorry.

COVENTRY

"If magic and all of the realm of folklore did exist, we would bureaucratize it just like anything else," says Bill Willingham, creator of *Coventry*. The series is a powerful (and decidedly adult) mix of gritty urban legend and mythology, where evil comes in cute forms and heroes must have their papers in order.

Willingham, a veteran of superhero and fantasy books like *Elementals* and *Ironwood*, writes and draws *Coventry*, published bimonthly by Fantagraphics Books. It's the story of an America where magic and sorcery never vanished, and mythic heroes still walk the streets. The title's also rife with government agencies regulating everything from magical practices to werewolves.

"*Coventry* is to magic as Las Vegas is to gambling," Willingham says. "It's the world capital of all that's weird and strange." Willingham's *Elementals* skewered the sacred cows of superheroism, and *Coventry* continues in that vein. Here, "heroes" don't wear tights and toss around cars. They're practical types who use their powers to keep the peace among natural and supernatural entities. And they're all duly registered with the proper authorities, causing a potentially explosive political situation.

"The idea that [heroism] requires a license is personally repugnant to me," Willingham says. While he's loath to reveal future storylines, expect to see some heroes decide they don't want to be regulated.

Coventry focuses on the celebrity hero Claudia Nevermore and the down-on-his-luck former cop Leslie "Max" Maxwell. "They are my yin and yang of the licensed private hero," Willingham says. "Claudia is the media darling. She is the height of the hype. Max is the other end of that scale. He's just a little schmuck investigator—no leaping over tall buildings, no faster than a speeding bullet."

Though many of the characters have "super" powers, *Coventry* won't feature multi-page brawls. "Someone will eventually come up to Claudia and say, 'You're the most renowned combat sorcerer we have, and you've never duked it out in public,'" Willingham says. "Her point is, 'I'm

By James Busbee

At top: *I.M. Lost from* Lost Stories. ***Clockwise from far left:*** *Mike S. (*Copybook Tales*), Lucas the werewolf mobster (*Coventry*), Beezil (*Coventry*), the two gnomes (*Lost Stories*), Mike L. (*Copybook Tales*) and Jamie (*Copybook Tales*).*

good enough to manipulate things that it doesn't have to come to that.' A good portion of heroism is intelligent preventive maintenance."

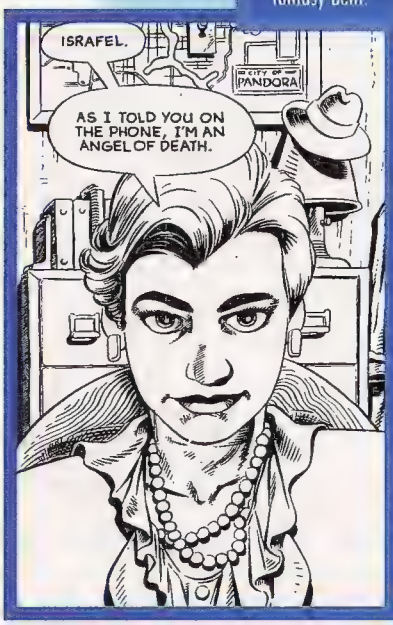
But even for the heroes in *Coventry*, no case is open-and-shut. Claudia must figure out why the god Kuzun has cursed a small town with a plague of frogs. As powerful as she is, Claudia's mystical sources of information still give her a runaround to rival any Department of Motor Vehicles.

Max, on the other hand, must track down the angel Samachedrael, whose daily responsibility is deciding which humans suffer random and accidental deaths. It seems Sam hasn't been very random-minded lately—one day he kills 13 guys named Bob, for instance. Heaven itself contracts Max to find the rogue angel and bring him to justice.

Sure, there are heroes in *Coventry*, but there's also Beezil, a tiny demon whose cartoonish appearance conceals a soul of the blackest evil. Already, he's devoured people whole, survived a stabbing and enlisted Richard Nixon as his lieutenant. With world domination on Beezil's mind, Willingham's goal for the little devil is simple: "I hope to make him the most evil character that's ever appeared in comics."

Coventry #5 hits comic shops in January, continuing the current storylines which'll run through the first 10 issues. Beyond that, the door's wide open. "Coventry is a place wherein everything [mythological] that we've believed to be true, *is*," Willingham says. "Now it'll all rub up together, and we'll see what kind of friction it creates."

THE HYPE
TITLE: Coventry
GENRE: Fantasy/Adventure
WHY YOU'LL DIG IT: Because it's a really fun and intriguing way of looking at magic through today's bureaucratic eyes. Think "The X-Files" with more of a fantasy bent.



THE COPYBOOK TALES

Twisted Sister. Rubik's Cube. Claremont and Byrne's *X-Men*. If these products send you into fits of nostalgia for your lost youth during the 1980s, then you've gotta read *The Copybook Tales*, a new bimonthly from Slave Labor Graphics. And even if you don't know Wang Chung from egg foo young, there's still plenty to enjoy.

The brainchild of writer Jay Torres and artist Tim Levins, *TCT* might be called a "sit-comic," in Torres' words—a situation comedy in comic book form. "Tim and I are both really big fans of 'The Wonder Years,'" Torres says. "That show [about a young boy coming of age in the 1960s] had a lot of '60s nostalgia. We wanted to do something similar for our [1980s] generation. *TCT* reflects back on high school and what we learned then. The pop culture all around us made us who we are today."

At left: *Don't be fooled by the cartoony exterior of Coventry's Beezil—he's one bad dude.*
Below: *The angel Israfel (left) hires Maxwell to track down a renegade angel of death.*

The book focuses on the life and times of twentysomething Jamie Cruz, who's graduated college and dreams of becoming a comic book writer. But the series also simultaneously flashes back to Jamie's high-school misadventures. The linchpin is Jamie's "copybook," a journal he kept as a youth which he mines for storylines as an adult.

Jamie began as a version of Torres himself, but soon grew into his own character. "He's a bigger goof than I am," Torres says. "He makes all sorts of silly mistakes. But I've also imbued in Jamie a lot of qualities I wish I had—he's very optimistic and he's also very focused."

The "1980s" Jamie's closest friends are "The Three Mikes," who share a name but have vastly different personalities. In the present, Jamie's confidants are his partner Thatcher, who produces the art for Jamie's comics, and Bernie, a young woman who'll play an important role in Jamie's future.

"The biggest challenge is to make it clear that what's happening [in the flashbacks] has a reason, as opposed to just throwing in a Rubik's Cube reference, making everyone nostalgic, and then going back to the present storyline," Torres says. So when the "present" Jamie goes to an awkward Halloween party, the story flashes back to a high-school costume party where the younger Jamie felt similarly out-of-place.

The Copybook Tales #6 hit stands in September, continuing the opening story arc that introduced readers to Jamie's past and present worlds. "Issue #7 [due in November] will close the chapter, with Jamie and his whole postgraduate college blues," Torres says. "He'll get out of his funk and figure out he wants to do comics.

"The next story arc is going to be a romantic comedy," Torres continues. "I'm a big fan of films like 'When Harry Met Sally…', and I aspire to write a comic that funny and with that romantic angle to it."

Ironically, the same superheroes Torres loved as a kid are now causing him trouble as an adult. "We're fighting against superheroes

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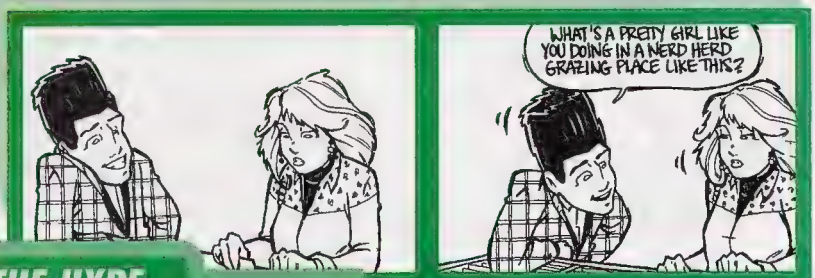

At left: Copybook Tales *is on the money when it comes to a fanboy's social life.*

THE HYPE

TITLE: Copybook Tales
GENRE: Situation comedy/Drama
WHY YOU'LL DIG IT: Because every comic fan has experienced things that happen in this book. Wanna create comics? Get a girlfriend that won't think you're a geek? It's all in here.

to get noticed," he says. "With all the books out there with splashy colors and heaving breasts and capes and tights, it's easy to overlook a little book about growing up in the '80s. We're confident new readers will like it; it's just a matter of getting people to try the book once."

LOST STORIES

Ever wonder what happened to that high-school term paper that disappeared just before class? Or your long-lost car keys? Or vanished-without-a-trace folks like Jimmy Hoffa and Amelia Earhart?

Creators John Riley and Garrett Berner know. They'll tell you to look in The World of All Lost Things.

The World is the setting for the dramatic fantasy *Lost Stories*, Riley and Berner's new bimonthly series from Creative Frontiers. "The World of All Lost Things exists separately from our own world, but most of the things that populate it came from our world," Riley says. The World in question is a hodgepodge of mountains, oceans and deserts, featuring mythical elements such as ogres and talking clouds.

Then there's I.M. Lost. The unfortunately named I.M. is a teenager perpetually on the losing end of life. "Most people hear [my name] and figure it was some sort of cruel joke by my mom," I.M. himself admits in issue #1. "They're right, although my mom never admitted it to me."

"He's the kid who has the dreams," says Riley, "but never had the chance to follow them. He's like a diamond who's never been allowed to shine."

Whether he knows it or not, the World's always played an important role in I.M.'s life. His father disappeared, presumably into The World, just before I.M.'s birth. For most of I.M.'s difficult young life, malicious gnomes from The World have appeared via tiny black holes and snatched away his homework, lunches and other vital items. (As luck would have it, the gnomes are visible only to I.M.) Five pages into the first issue, they yank I.M. himself into one of the black holes.

"He doesn't realize it at the moment, but he's been liberated," Riley says. "He has his opportunity to shine." I.M. soon learns his kidnapping has something to do with his lost father. Through the aid of a humanoid cloud nicknamed "Strat" and a beautiful, mysterious woman named Kylie, I.M. begins to learn more about this new land and his important role in it.

"We'll be exploring all The World's kingdoms as I.M. goes on his journey," Riley says. "He's going to change as he becomes one of the few beings that's been in touch with all the kingdoms. He'll uncover their overall political structure. The gnomes are really high in that structure, and they want to keep it that way."

The most unpredictable element of *Lost Stories* is the frequent appearance of the black holes that suck away elements of our world, including everything from lawyers to fry cooks. "The holes are a function of nature, but also sometimes a function of design," Riley says. "What comes through the holes is often what certain [World] players need to stay in power."

Issue #4, hitting stands in November, concludes the series' introduction with an all-out *mêlée*. Issue #5 will see the introduction of Strike Force O'Shea, "a SEAL team comprised of displaced leprechauns," Riley says. "I.M. gets caught in a power struggle between O'Shea and the Flotilla of Lost Ships, a group of people who party their lives away waiting for the next black hole to open."

Riley plans to keep *Lost Stories* running as long as the ideas continue to flow. "Above everything else, it's a fun book, where anything can and probably will happen," he says. "*Lost Stories* is about real things happening to real people in a totally surreal world."

The Tennessee-based James Busbee is just a little schmuck writer, but he hopes to one day be the height of the hype.

THE HYPE

TITLE: Lost Stories
GENRE: Fantasy/Drama
WHY YOU'LL DIG IT: Who hasn't ransacked their house looking for those missing car keys? Or that one lost sock? They all apparently end up in one place: The World of All Lost Things. *Why* they end up there is a whole 'nother story...

At right: Lost Stories' *I.M. Lost (far right) encounters beings from genocidal ogres (left) to a SEAL team comprised of displaced leprechauns.*

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DREAM TEAMS 2

'Wizard' picks the ultimate creative combos for DC's core comic titles

You're in charge of DC Comics.

You pick the writer. You pick the artist. You decide the fate of the most recognizable superhero characters in the world.

Okay, that's a lie, but admit it–every fanboy does it; sitting around with fellow comic fans, arguing how *this* writer would be perfect for a series or how *that* artist would just kick giant ass. Heck, we here at *Wizard* are guilty of it too.

And it was proven when this sorta thing crept into the pages of the magazine. Waaaay back in *Wizard* #61, a hot topic of debate was spawned: comic book dream teams. This sparked by a groundswell of letters where fans listed their "dream creative teams" on their favorite Marvel and DC titles, and wanted to know what ours were. So we ran a feature in *Wizard* #69 listing our Marvel dream teams. Now is our chance to answer the letters requesting our DC selections.

So we came up with DC's top 20 mainstream superhero titles and became DC "editors" debating the writers and artists we would put on "our" books. Our criteria was simple: the creators we chose had to be inside the realm of possibility. Out were the obvious "Yeah, Alan Moore would do an awesome Superman" and "Neal Adams on Batman," simply because those creators aren't–for whatever reasons–interested in working on DC properties anymore.

That said, with no offense intended to DC's current creative teams, what follows is our best crack at some "dream teams" for the core DC Universe...

Action Comics

Writer: KURT BUSIEK **Artist:** JERRY ORDWAY

WHY BUSIEK: This is a no-brainer. With Superman gearing up to be DC's next big franchise with a cartoon, movie and toys in the works, DC's best bet would be to arm their big gun hero with comics' gunslingers inside his four monthly titles. The choice of Busiek is obvious—the award-winning writer handles his own Superman-like hero, Samaritan in *Astro City*, in such a way that he is one man driven by the responsibility of protecting lives with his great superpowers. Plus, Busiek's specialty—best seen in *Marvels* and *Astro City*—is bringing out the humanity of his heroes. It's this quality that would make him perfect to handle the "humanity" of the Kryptonian Superman, something the character holds dear.

WHY ORDWAY: Bar none, Ordway is the best modern artist to draw Superman. Ordway's Superman (best seen in *Adventures of Superman* #424-#445) is drawn more massively than other interpretations, but doesn't look too bulky. His ultra-slick style meshes perfectly with a squeaky-clean hero like Supes. Ordway's Superman is iconic and larger-than-life—the way he should be.

Adventures of Superman

Writer: JAMES ROBINSON **Artist:** GARY FRANK

WHY ROBINSON: Check out *Starman* and *The Golden Age*—his superheroes are smart, his supporting characters bubble over with emotion and the obstacles/villains he throws at his heroes are never easily overcome. And since they don't come more savvy than Superman, Robinson is our man to highlight Supes' super-noggin, juggle a massive supporting cast AND come up with villains and predicaments that would challenge the most powerful superhero in any universe.

WHY FRANK: If you caught *Supergirl* #6, you'd know that Frank's Superman commands respect. His clean art style has Supes looking dignified, yet not afraid of getting his hair all mussed-up in a slugfest. Plus, for a guy who made a name for himself on *Incredible Hulk* for a couple of years, having Frank draw a monthly Superman book would be *no problema*.

Aquaman

Writer: J.M. DeMATTEIS
Artist: JIM CALAFIORE

WHY DeMATTEIS: As the current writer of Marvel's *Silver Surfer*, DeMatteis successfully takes a character and makes him feel like an outsider wherever he goes, is at home nowhere and is constantly searching his soul for the meaning

Ordway (at top) is the modern master on Superman. Gary Frank (above) gives Supes a clean look.

Calafiore's doing a bang-up job on the King of the Sea already (above). So, if it ain't broke...

of his life and battling the darkness he sometimes sees within. Heck, cut off the Surfer's left hand and he *is* Aquaman! On top of alla that, DeMatteis proved he can handle even darker stories—something Aquaman occasionally finds himself involved in—with his Vertigoesque writing on *Man-Thing* and *Amazing Spider-Man*.

WHY CALAFIORE: Calafiore has done the impossible as the current regular artist on *Aquaman*—make underwater adventures look cool as Hell. Besides characters who look like they're actually floating in water, his eye for detail almost gives George Pérez a run for his money. Go ahead—count the individual scales on each fish. Or the leaves on seaweed. Or the amount of steps in Aquaman's throne room. *Aquaman* is where he belongs.

Batman

Writer: PAUL DINI **Artist:** JOHN ROMITA JR.

WHY DINI: See if these episodes of "Batman: The Animated Series" ring a bell. The tragic Mr. Freeze episode? The laughing fish Joker story? The first Harley Quinn/Poison Ivy team-up? They were all kick-ass shows, all written by Paul Dini. His cartoon version of Batman was truly a Dark Knight Detective and not some dumbed-down "Super Friends" joke. Add to the fact that he can tackle comics, as proven in the award-winning *Batman: Mad Love* one-shot and you see why Batman deserves this guy.

WHY ROMITA JR.: Plain and simple, his Batman is massive, dark and edgy. How do we know? If you caught the *Punisher/Batman* crossover, you'd know it too. Romita's Batman truly would show why criminals are a superstitious and cowardly lot. And his NYC in *Punisher War Zone* and *Daredevil* proves Romita's more than ready to take on the most dangerous city on Earth...Gotham.

We're bringing the bad-ass back to the Batman and Romita Jr. helps the cause.

Batman: Shadow of the Bat

Writers: MATT WAGNER and STEVEN T. SEAGLE
Artist: LEINIL FRANCIS YU

WHY WAGNER and SEAGLE: No one handles pure crime drama like these two guys. In DC/Vertigo's *Sandman Mystery Theatre*, this writing duo uses real-life crime as the series' focus—and proves that something based in fact can be more frightening than fiction. Although they don't always rely upon crack detective work, they can spin a chilling mystery for their hero. Also, their supporting casts are handled perfectly—something Batman could desperately use.

WHY FRANCIS YU: This rookie is *good*. As the current *Wolverine* penciler, he somehow manages to have his art appear ultra-clean, ultra-detailed and ultra-*gritty* all at the same time. A Batman artist has to make Gotham and its denizens appear gritty and dangerous as well as handle costumed vigilantes tracking down maniacal clowns and occasional monsters; Yu's proven he's one of the few who can do the job.

Catwoman

Writer: TERRY MOORE **Artist:** MICHAEL TURNER

WHY MOORE: A powerless chick thrust into a weird situation with offbeat romantic triangles? Moore does that every month in his *Strangers in Paradise* book. But in Catwoman, Moore'd capitalize on something he can also do: build high-stakes suspense in a real-world setting with disturbingly real villains. Sounds like *Catwoman* to us. Specifically, in *SiP* #1-#9, he beautifully handled a story of embezzlement, espionage and prostitution—and that's why we'd love to see his take on Selina Kyle.

WHY TURNER: This guy does more than draw sexy women. As *Witchblade*'s artist, he takes the art to a new level by adding detailed scenery and props, like expensive furniture or fancy window designs. Since a *Catwoman* artist needs to be versatile, this approach works well in a book that can be set in Gotham's alleyways, posh apartments or world-famous museums that are about to be burglarized.

Detective Comics

Writer: JEPH LOEB **Artist:** TIM SALE

WHY LOEB: It's no mystery why Loeb's our choice for *Detective*. Been reading *Batman: The Long Halloween*? Then you know Loeb can spin a true Batman mystery, bringing back the "detective" in Dark Knight Detective. And, as we said with Wagner and Seagle on *Shadow*, Batman needs a strong supporting cast. In *Halloween*, Loeb delivered the BEST Batman supporting cast ever to appear in comics, so we already know he can do the job.

WHY SALE: He's Loeb's perfect partner in crime on *Halloween*. They work well together on Batman, and are in synch enough to tell a entertaining tale. Artistically, he makes Batman bulky and gritty (love that beard stubble). His villains are macabre and his rendition of Gotham City is both a nightmarish cesspool and an opulent kingdom. His Bat-art is second to none.

Sale's an expert with dramatic shadows and lighting, which helps add to the mystery on *Detective Comics*.

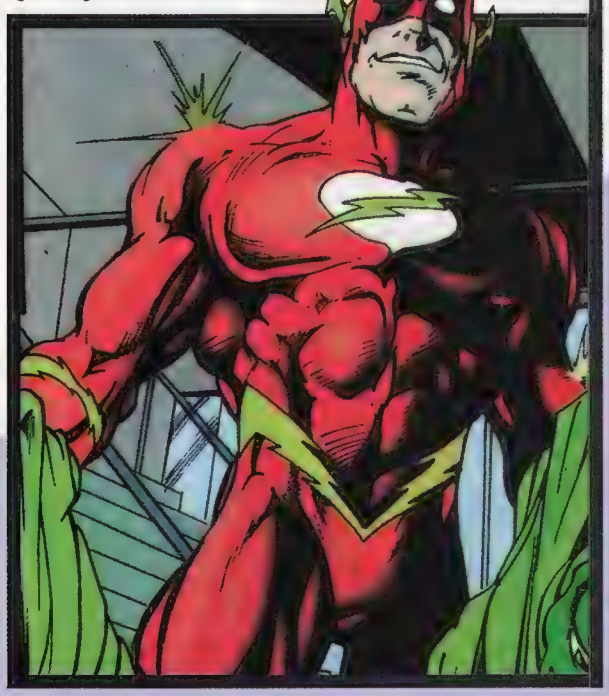
Flash

Writer: RON MARZ **Artist:** CARLOS PACHECO

WHY MARZ: Marz has proven in *Green Lantern* he can do one thing perfectly: handle a powerful young superhero with everyday problems AND mix in high-powered baddies who can give one of the most powerful characters in the DCU a run for his money. What he could do with the young trouble-magnet Wally West, his richly diverse supporting cast and the Flash's Rogues Gallery makes our mouth water.

WHY PACHECO: The Flash needs flash, pure and simple. For a guy who's in constant flux, the Flash needs an artist who can draw characters that *book*—lotsa neat lightning effects and cool camera angles in the art to keep it interesting. Pacheco's high-octane performance on *X-Men* proves he's in the race as *Flash* penciler supreme. For a taste of Pacheco's Flash, check out *Flash* #93-#94—you'll see why he's a great pick for DC's resident super-speedster.

Pacheco's proven his chops on the scarlet speedster (below), so he's our man.



Green Lantern

Writer: JOHN ARCUDI **Artist:** JOE MADUREIRA

WHY ARCUDI: He's hip to the Gen-X mentality. As writer of DC's hysterical *Major Bummer* and Image's teen team in *Gen13*, he's shown he can craft interesting twists on superheroics. *Major Bummer*'s Louis is a reluctant superhero, which is like Kyle Rayner to a degree since the whole Green Lantern shtick was kinda plopped into his lap. And, like Louis, Kyle gets himself into whole worlds of trouble and has plenty of problems. Arcudi would be able to tackle these trials and tribulations with his awesome sense of humor. (Unsolicited plug: Read DC's *Major Bummer*! It's one of THE most underrated books in comics!) Plus, the writer's supporting casts are strong, and that's something GL needs to add to his everyman quality.

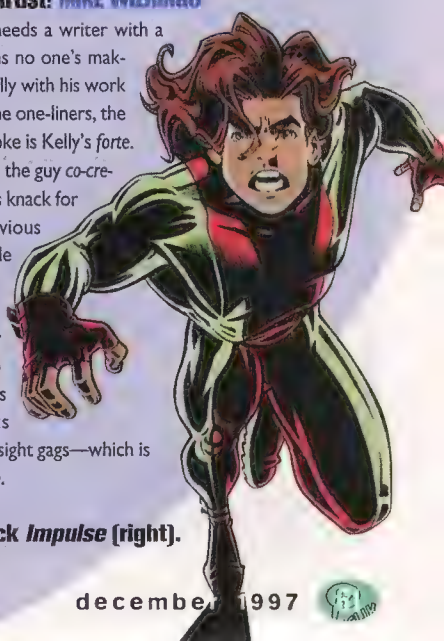
WHY MADUREIRA: Madureira is perfect for GL. Like freelance artist Rayner, Madureira's a young guy who can relate to the pressures of being a freelance artist. And with Mad's manga background and what he has shown himself capable of with his interpretations of a Shi'ar warship, Sentinels and cool futuristic battle armor, just think about alla that cool crap that'd come out of Kyle's ring!

Impulse

Writer: JOE KELLY **Artist:** MIKE WIERINGO

WHY KELLY: *Impulse* needs a writer with a sense of humor. It seems no one's making fanboys giggle like Kelly with his work on Marvel's *Deadpool*. The one-liners, the sight gags, the ongoing joke is Kelly's *forte*.

WHY WIERINGO: Hey, the guy *co-created* Impulse! Wieringo's knack for super-speedsters is obvious when you see the crackle of lightning surrounding them and the immense G-forces forcing their teeth to grit. He can also draw fast-paced stories and is at the top of his game when doing visual sight gags—which is standard fare on *Impulse*.



'Ringo draws a slick *Impulse* (right).

Jimenez's super-detailed larger-than-life heroes make him perfect for the JLA (right).

JLA

Writer: GRANT MORRISON
Artist: PHIL JIMENEZ

WHY MORRISON: No one, and we mean NO ONE, writes the JLA as well as Morrison. For a team that's comprised of the most powerful, unbeatable characters in the DCU, Morrison does the impossible: he comes close to having the JLA get beat every month. Aside from the cool new takes on old villains and cool new bad guys Morrison is introducing, he's also managed to stay true to each of the various members' characterizations, which—when you're dealing with characters as varied as Superman, Green Lantern and Aquaman—is no small feat. We'd be nuts to move this guy off the book.

WHY JIMENEZ: This guy is still comics' best-kept secret. With a style that combines detailed photo-realism AND the ability to draw dynamic, bigger-than-life superheroes like in *Tempest* or the gazillion-character JLA pinup in *JLA Secret Files* makes him the main man to put on DC's #1 book.

Legion of Super-Heroes

Writers: GERARD JONES and LEN STRAZEWSKI
Artist: JOSÉ LADRONN

WHY JONES and STRAZEWSKI: *Prime* was a top-notch teen superhero book, which they co-wrote. As for what qualifies them for *Legion*, Jones and Strazewski mixed similar themes in *Prime*: sci-fi elements, government conspiracies and teen melodrama. They'd just need to adjust to a gigantic cast of characters and they'd be all set.

WHY LADRONN: The artist of *Spider-Boy Team-Up* must love the Legion. After all, in that Amalgam one-shot, he had tons of Legion types—and they all looked really cool. And the fact that he pulled it off without having each panel look like a Legion of Cluttered Heroes, makes him a winner in our book. 'Course it doesn't hurt that his style, now gracing the pages of *Cable*, is making fans drool for more. And "more" is what they'd get if he drew this cast of a zillion superheroes.

Ladronn seems to handle the teen team dynamics, so he's all over *Legion* (left).

Nightwing

Writer: CHUCK DIXON **Artist:** BRETT BOOTH

WHY DIXON: Dixon, for the first time since the early run of the '80s *New Teen Titans*, has given Dick Grayson a real personality rather than having him become a Batman wannabe. The writer's developed one of the best DC supporting casts in just a handful of issues, is doing a top-notch job of mixing classic Bat-villains with brand-new Nightwing villains...and, aside from the stupid name, Blüdhaven is rapidly becoming the coolest DC city right behind Gotham.

WHY BOOTH: He draws great, dynamic shots of acrobatic type characters (seen in *Backlash* and *Spider-Man/Backlash*). Nightwing, DC's top acrobat, could benefit immensely from the crazy poses that Booth would stick him in—bounding across rooftops, dodging bullets or just duking it out with the bad guys. It doesn't hurt that the guy's overall style is a cross between Todd McFarlane and Art Adams, two of comics' top artists.

ROBIN

Writer: ROGER STERN **Artist:** STEVE SKROCE

WHY STERN: If there's one thing Stern did well when he wrote *Amazing Spider-Man* (#224-#252), it's that he gave Peter Parker problems. Tons of 'em. Girl problems. School problems. Double-identity problems. Sounds like he'd be more than qualified to give more of the same to ol' Tim Drake, whose life has all of the above. Add in parental problems to Stern's arsenal, and Robin would never have it better (or worse, depending on how you look at it).

WHY SKROCE: On *X-Man*, he drew a great teen hero. On *Amazing Spider-Man* he draws a great acrobatic Spidey in a city environment. Combine these with Skroce's ability to work with shadows (handy when you're dealing with the other half of the Dark Knight Detective) and this guy is perfect for *Robin*.

SUPERBOY

Writer: KEITH GIFFEN **Artist:** ROGER CRUZ

WHY GIFFEN: Giffen would eat this book up. As the writer of *Legion of Super-Heroes*, *Lobo* and *Legion '89*, Giffen is no stranger to putting powerful heroes in clever life-threatening situations. Not many writers can handle big-scale threats with a sense of humor like him—and that's something *Superboy* thrives on.

WHY CRUZ: 'Cause this guy kicks monster butt on books with superpowered teens. As current artist of *X-Man*, Cruz draws his teen heroes slightly bulkier than normal, making them appear larger-than-life, yet not having them look like a midget adult hero.

Booth's proven himself on acrobatic heroes at Image and now he's ready for Nightwing.

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SUPERGIRL

Writers: TOM PEYER and TOM McCRAW
Artist: MARTY EGELAND

WHY PEYER and McCRAW: Since these guys do a good job with a ton of characters in *Legion of Super-Heroes*, imagine if they only had to focus on one? And since they can get into the teen mindset of the Legion heroines so well, Supergirl—only slightly older—would be right up their alley. Their ability to weave so many relationships in *LoSH* could really shine here as they focus on one character and build up her supporting cast and her world of Leesburg.

WHY EGELAND: He draws great heroic women in a hip, slick style. His panel-to-panel storytelling is super-smooth and he has a style fans can warm up to easily. And to his credit, he made a nobody character like Dolphin a stand-out character in *Aquaman*. He made her sexy, even without the help of a traditional superhero costume. And if you have any reservations about his Supergirl, check out his rendition (see right).

SUPERMAN

Writer: MARK WAID **Artist:** ALAN DAVIS

WHY WAID: He understands Superman. You can tell when you read *Kingdom Come* that Waid gave a good portrayal of the Man of Steel and the responsibility that comes with being Superman. In that futuristic tale, Waid's Supes was just one guy who was relied upon by the world—and the pressures that come along with that role. We wouldn't mind giving Waid the Superman "ball" and see where he runs with it.

Egeland's smooth style would warm fans up to his Supergirl (above), while Davis' polished style is a no-brainer for Superman (left).

WHY DAVIS: He's tackled Batman in *Detective*, taken on Marvel's X-universe in *Excalibur* and even rebooted Marvel's first family in *Fantastic Four*. It makes sense that a steady artist like Davis would take on another comics cornerstone like Superman. His style is so polished and his heroes so massive that you're surprised he hasn't taken on the Man of Steel already. Another asset is his versatility, which comes in handy when drawing a Super-book; it would be no problem for him to ease into a space story, a battle on Apokolips or even a clash on the city streets of Metropolis.

SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL

Writer: STEVE VANCE **Artist:** DAN JURGENS

WHY VANCE: This guy is ready to step up to the big time. His current work on *Adventures in the DC Universe* proves that he can also tell a simple, entertaining story that brings out the best of each character he writes. His grasp of supporting characters in *Adventures* proves Supes' background cast would be a cake walk. And in a short space, Vance shows he can pack a fast-paced tale in a only a 16-page story—something Superman needs. And as a former *Simpsons Comics* vet, Vance would give the Man of Steel a healthy dose of humor.

WHY JURGENS: Wanna see a great-looking Superman? Check out *Superman* #58-#100, which spotlighted Jurgens' elegant rendition

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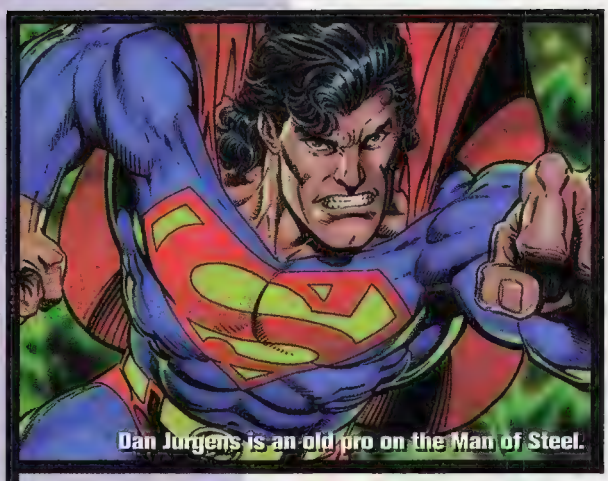
of the Man of Steel—a style that many Super-fans regard as the definitive '90s Superman. His Superman towers over other DC heroes, looking like the ultimate powerhouse superhero.


Dan Jurgens is an old pro on the Man of Steel.

Teen Titans

Writer: KARL KESEL **Artist:** TOM GRUMMETT

WHY KESEL: Nobody writes teen heroes like Kesel. If you read the first year's worth of *Superboy*, you'd know that Kesel can spin a great action tale, weave intriguing subplots and write the hippest dialogue this side of your local high school. We can't think of anyone better to give DC's brightest super-teens their chance to shine.

And for the record, our Teen Titans team would be treated like the new JLA by using the big gun super-teens: Robin, Superboy, Impulse, Mary Marvel and, umm...some new female character we're bettin' Kesel could dream up. (And no, we don't think DC's other female teen heroine, Spoiler, should make the roster. Yeah, we dig her, but it's too much fun seeing Robin doing his best to get her to quit the hero gig in *Robin*.)

Grummett mastered the teen heroes individually, so let 'im handle these guys as a team.

WHY GRUMMETT: Nobody draws teen heroes like Grummett. Whether he's drawing Robin, Superboy, Generation X or the Legion of Super-Heroes, Grummett is the best at making teenagers look like young adults. His Robin isn't a miniature version of an adult hero, he's a *younger* version. The underdevelopment of facial features, the body height, the youthful expressions…they're all there. And hey, his storytelling style is vital for a superteam: it's clean and dynamic.

Wonder Woman

Writer: PETER DAVID **Artist:** JIM BALENT

WHY DAVID: David has proven over the years with *Incredible Hulk* that a hero with great strength isn't always a hindrance to telling entertaining stories. And his style is to take his characters back to the basics and Wonder Woman is no exception. He'd probably explore why an Amazon ambassador of peace chooses to preach it by using warrior tactics.

WHY BALENT: Three things make Jim Balent one of the industry's best least-known artists. 1) Exciting panels, cool-looking characters and smooth storytelling make him a solid artist. 2) His reliability. Regrettably most superstar artists these days lack the discipline or skill to generate more than a bimonthly or quarterly book—but Balent has drawn over four years' worth, 50-plus issues of *Catwoman…without missing an issue*. The man puts the "pro" in professionalism. 3) His women are the hottest babes in comics. He'd make Wonder Woman kick ass and look good doin' it. W

If the Wizard *staff truly ran comics, we'd go back and redo that Wolverine/Lobo fight from* Marvel Versus DC *#3. No way that Canadian doesn't get crushed to jelly in three panels.*

Balent's Wonder Woman (above) would be the sexiest babe in comics.

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The Wizard Q&A:

By Tom Russo • Photos by Brian Smith

GEORGE PÉREZ

The legendary artist has two goals in returning to his beloved 'Avengers'—make the book fun again and prove he can handle the rigors of a monthly title

GEORGE, GEORGE, GEORGE. PLEASE! CONTROL YOURSELF!

Calling George Pérez long-distance to hash out a date to visit with him at his Florida HQ, you get the idea that he must get this kind of thing a lot. After all, you can't have been talking to the guy for more than a couple of minutes, and already he's gushed to you about the 36-character panel he's penciling for December's "Heroes Return" relaunch of *The Avengers*...and the "Basic Training" column he's doing for an upcoming *Wizard* (on the subject of "group shots," naturally)...*and* how an animator buddy of his invited him not long ago to give a lecture to Disney's secret society of Pérez groupies. Sheesh, all you were looking for was directions from the airport.

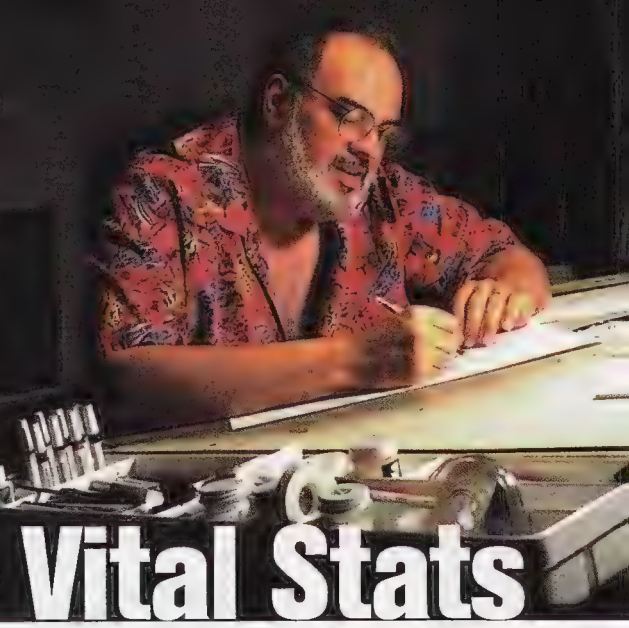
But it's just this kind of irrepressible enthusiasm that has helped Pérez, 43, remain a fan favorite in comics for more than two decades. How did he first make a name for himself as an industry newcomer in the mid-'70s? Why, on *Avengers*, of course—a book shunned by many artists at the time, because whether they quick-sketched a lone superhero or carpal-tunneled their way through an entire top-selling super-*team*, the paycheck was the same. Pérez, characteristically, was pumped to put in the overtime. And from *The New Teen Titans* to *Crisis on Infinite Earths* to *Wonder Woman*, whenever Pérez has been pumped about a project, there's been absolutely no mistaking it on the printed page.

His off-the-charts energy signature can still be found all over the Titans mythos. During Pérez's stellar run drawing the group's 1980s incarnation, they went head-to-head with Marvel's *Uncanny X-Men* for sales supremacy. But the X-Men, despite various creative changes through the years, went on to remake Marvel Comics into, well, X-Men Comics. Once Pérez left the Titans, DC's top guns shuffled quietly out of the spotlight.

But hey, this is no time for misty-eyed fan reminiscences. You're at Pérez's door, and his warm, bearish handshake is pulling you inside. You catch a glimpse of those work-in-progress pages of *Avengers* and his creator-owned *Crimson Plague* on a drafting table ("Burning the candle at both ends," as he cheerfully explains) and it suddenly sinks in: After a comparatively low-profile stretch, this is one comic book hero who really *has* returned. Better still, it turns out there's plenty of good stuff that Pérez didn't already spill over the phone...

Flanked by his own drawings and photos of his real-life cast in *Crimson Plague*, Pérez is, um, ecstatic about returning to the monthly *Avengers*.

Name: George Pérez (pronounced PER-ez)
Occupation: Artist/writer/self-professed detail "junkie"
Born: June 9, 1954 in South Bronx, N.Y.
Base of Operations: Florida
Career Highlights: Star-making run on *The Avengers* in the mid-'70s; with writer Marv Wolfman, launched *The New Teen Titans* in 1980, quickly building it into DC's flagship title; helped rewrite the continuity of the entire DC Universe with the sprawling 1985-86 maxi-series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*; undertook a major revamp of Wonder Woman in 1987, making her a DC icon once again; returned to Marvel with the ultra-popular 1991 event series *The Infinity Gauntlet*, followed by *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect* and the adult-themed *Sachs & Violens*; and was the artist on 1983's infamously scrapped JLA/Avengers crossover, remembered by many as "the greatest comics event that never was."
Greatest Number of Characters Drawn in a Single Shot: "I think the Avengers 30th anniversary poster had about 102 characters. But there's a cover that I'm penciling and Alex Ross is painting for a *Crisis on Infinite Earths* collectors' edition that's upcoming, and that's going to have 400 to 500. Alex actually upped the ante by saying that I shouldn't do just the 200 characters I originally planned, but everyone who appeared in the series. It more than doubles the number, but if Alex is willing..."



Vital Stats

WIZARD: The last time you worked on *The Avengers* was 1980. What made you go back to the book after all these years?

GEORGE PÉREZ: Part of it was to reestablish myself in the comic community. There are a lot of new readers out there who wonder, [*goofy tone*] "What's the big deal about George Pérez?" I was inspired when I did [1991's] *Infinity Gauntlet* by a comment that a young fan made to me—and it was a compliment, earnestly meant, earnestly taken: He said I was going to be the next Todd McFarlane. That one statement made me realize that in this industry, you always have a chance to be new to *someone*.

And Marvel is in a situation where it's been—no secret to anyone—in a lot of trouble. One of the things I wanted to be sure of was that even if it all went kablooey and Marvel went under, I at least was part of the CPR team. I think giving up on Marvel is the worst thing the professional community can do if it wants to see those characters kept alive. It's not Marvel as a corporation that I'm out to serve—I'm well aware of the corporate giant and the bad things that have happened—it's Marvel's *characters*. And it's because they mean a lot to me. I grew up with them.

What's your take on *The Avengers* going to be? The book had been going through some awfully muddled times before "Heroes Reborn." [EDITOR'S NOTE: The recently completed "Heroes Reborn" was a one-year reboot of the Avengers and Fantastic Four characters by artists Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld.]

Well, they forgot what the Avengers are supposed to be. As [series writer] Kurt [Busiek] has defined it, they're Marvel's version of the Knights of the Round Table. By trying to copy the success of the X-Men, people were making the Avengers something they weren't. Way before the deal with Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld, they were Image-izing the Avengers, and it wasn't working.

What I'm hoping to do with Kurt is to instill a feeling of awe and of old friends coming back. The sensation I'd like to give is the one I had when I saw the first "Star Trek" movie: Even though I didn't particularly care for the movie itself, when you saw Captain Kirk again for the first time. That's what I'm going for, something that will make the old comics people feel warm and fuzzy without alienating new readers and saying, "Oh, ignore 'Heroes Reborn.'" Hopefully we'll have something for both.

And how will you be handling the team visually?

When Kurt asks for characters to interact, I'll have them interact, but then I'll also add little [personality] bits that perhaps he hasn't mentioned. My whole feeling about the *Avengers*, as in any team book, is that I'm not drawing individual costumes—I'm drawing individuals *in* costume. So they all have to have individual characteristics. Even heights. Captain America always seems to be drawn so that he looks like the largest man in the room, even though Thor is taller and Iron Man is about the same height. But Cap doesn't lose his heroic stature just because he's not as tall as some of the others.

How closely are you working with Kurt?

We've gotten together a few times, actually—including once last June, when we went white-water rafting in Portland, near his home base. When I thought about it, I said, "My God, if anything happens, the entire *Avengers* team gets wiped out in one fell swoop!" [*Laughs*]

So now Marvel will put a new prohibitive clause to that effect in everybody's contract.

Right. "No white-water rafting, no parasailing, no hot-air ballooning, no bungee jumping."

Seriously, though.

There are certain things that Kurt likes about the Avengers and certain things that I like—some of them things we have in common, some not. But that's what makes it enjoyable—we get both our personalities in the book. Like that page. [*Points to an* Avengers *#1 proof featuring an oversize shot of Hawkeye sliding down a cable, using his bow as a makeshift pulley.*] That's a Kurt page. Kurt loves Hawkeye, and he wanted a real pinup-y shot, so I gave him one. The plot originally had him swinging down on a line, but I thought, "That's Spider-Man's shtick." So I used the effect of sliding down with the bow, because it makes him more unique.

What's in store in the way of specific stories?

Everyone who's ever been an Avenger, who's still alive and who's not a member of the Fantastic Four, is back for the opening story. Who's going to be in the final line-up is a question that will be answered around issue four—we'll have some favorites, but people might also be surprised at who's not in the group. And our second and third issues involve a warped reality, where we see the world totally recreated by Morgan Le Fey so that everything looks medieval. Just the idea of Wanda as a medieval witch, with the bodice and all that other great stuff you can

put on her... I'm doing a bondage cover: "Wanda Enchained!" [*Laughs*]

Shades of your *Sachs & Violens* work. So how will the final lineup be determined?

I think Kurt's basic idea is the same thing that happened when the new X-Men were introduced [in *Giant Size X-Men* #1]: "We have too many of you—who's gonna leave?"

You had to love that story back in *Avengers* #181 where the team's government liaison, Henry Peter Gyrich, comes in and tells them, "You're too big and unregulated. We're downsizing you."

Well, I think it should be a decision they make on their own: "We don't need this many people." And I guess they would also need heroes who are willing to commit their time.

In addition to the *Avengers* gig, you're also now writing and drawing *Crimson Plague*, your splashy new creator-owned quarterly. Give us the lowdown on that for those who didn't grab the first issue.

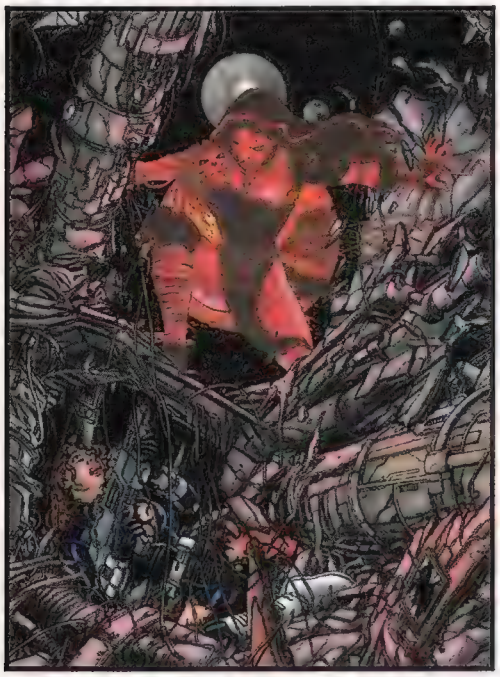
The story deals with DiNA Simmons, a genetically engineered young woman found as an embryo in a prison mining colony on one of Jupiter's moons, and whose blood is lethal, corrosive to the touch. Basically, she's a much better looking [version of H.R. Giger's] Alien. [*Laughs*] The "plague" element is that since she has grown to womanhood—and this was an idea actually brought to me *by* a woman—this poison becomes airborne during her menstrual cycle, so she can devastate an entire planet. Since that's the only part of her power that's out of her control, her goal is to find a cure. And that cure exists on Earth, which of course doesn't want her there.

One of the big selling points of *Crimson Plague* is that every single character bears a real person's name and likeness, be it a fan or a friend of yours.

Yeah, right now I've got a cast of over 160 people. DiNA is someone I met at a convention—she was having me sign her *Wonder Woman*. And Shannon Lower, who is my Ahab to DiNA's Moby Dick, is a ballroom dance teacher that my wife and I know. So is Lisa, the holographic narrator. But then also, as I've said many a time, the name of this book is *Crimson PLAGUE*, not *Crimson Minor Annoyance*, so I constantly need to replenish my cast.

So how do you tap the dramatic potential of this hunted character who's unable to control her own body—without having it play like a bad joke?

I knew that was going to be a walk on glass, and I'm still working on it. One comment I remember came from a woman who was a member of Friends of Lulu, an organization formed to better the image of women in comics. When she first heard of the concept, she thought, "Oh, let's all get ready with banners and placards and condemn this thing." And then the same person realized, "But it's George Pérez doing it." Because of my work on *Wonder Woman*, she was willing to give me the benefit of the doubt. And the fact is, I am well aware of the subject matter, and I don't consider it anything to be avoided. It's just a biological fact.



Pérez's controversial new series *Crimson Plague* stars DiNA (top), a woman whose blood unleashes an airborne plague during her menstrual cycle.

***Crimson Plague* notwithstanding, you seem to have an easier time than some of your peers when it comes to laying aside creative hats and not feeling the need to make everything "A George Pérez Production."**

After I started writing *Wonder Woman*, I know some people thought, "Now that you've done it, you won't relinquish it." But I enjoy working with other creators, because they challenge me. They'll do some-

Words of P(é)raise

Okay, fanboys, listen up: If you hear the name George Pérez and think, "Oh yeah, that guy who was inking *Teen Titans* for the past year," then you'd better hightail it over to Modern Comics Legends 101. Here's what some of the industry's top pros have to say about Pérez's influence on their careers:

C. Blankenhorn

ANDY KUBERT

I've always admired how he did team books, and how he handled doing all those panels and all those characters. I remember when my dad would bring home *The New Teen Titans*, I would look at that and go, "Oh my God, it's unbelievable, all that stuff in there." I didn't know how he ever kept it all together. But he did.

Paul Schiraldi

JIM LEE

I was a big George Pérez fan as a kid. I first saw his work on *The Avengers*, in an Ultron story [#162]. It had an incredible splash page: Thor coming down from the sky, and an ambulance, and *all these bricks*... It blew me away. And it wasn't just the attention to detail in his work, but the characters' body language—even though he was on team books, he was doing definitive versions of those characters.

Paul Schiraldi

JOE MADUREIRA

Pérez was definitely a huge influence. Some of the earliest comics I got were *The New Teen Titans*. And how he did it monthly, especially when he inked it himself, I just can't fathom. I definitely can't handle a team book like Pérez. I don't think anyone can, really.

Paul Schiraldi

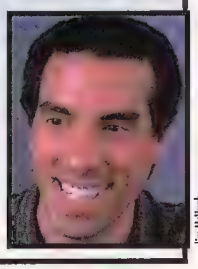
JOE QUESADA

People always think of the huge team battles George does, but if you look underneath all that, there's just beautiful storytelling and an overall love of comics. It just pours out of his work. But I think George's biggest influence on me, even more than his drawing skills, is how great he is with fans. He is the happiest man in comics.

Paul Schiraldi

ALEX ROSS

Growing up, Pérez was the summation of everything I loved about drawing superheroes. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was definitely my favorite childhood memory of reading comic books. And the fact that he had this instinct within him to draw every last superhero that ever existed, that infiltrated me. He gave me that disease. That's why *Kingdom Come* and *Marvels* exist—this passion to want to do your own version of every single character, it all came from Pérez.



Jim McHugh

MARC SILVESTRI

His eye for detail always boggled my mind. I would look at his stuff and just think, "Where does this all come from?" I figured he just never slept. Even here in the studio, you'll hear people talking about how George influenced them. And that's the highest compliment anyone can pay, to say that they modeled their style or career after someone else's. ■ *TR*

Pérez's eye for super-detail is seen in the cover to the new *Avengers* #1.

thing that didn't come to my mind. And my job is to then try to one-up them and make it even better. That becomes fun.

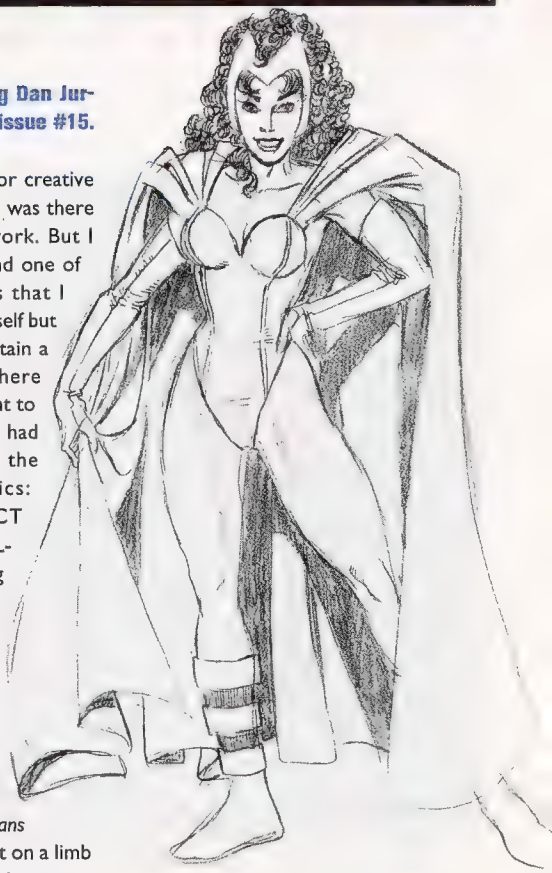
And I've also learned to accept my limitations. I am not fast. I wish I were. But unfortunately I obsess over my work. I am a very, very detail-oriented person. That's part of my popularity. But it's also part of what keeps me from producing as much work as I would like.

So where does that detail fixation come from?

A place I can actually pinpoint where I made a deliberate effort to move my style a little closer to realism and much more into detail was when I did, of all things, [Marvel's adaptation of the movie] "Logan's Run." Because I had to use photo reference. Even though we didn't have the rights to the likenesses of the actors, the sets needed to look like the sets and Washington needed to look like Washington, because that's what gave the movie its verisimilitude. And I became addicted to it. I became a junkie for reference material. It got to a point where I realized that if I wanted to have a career of any longevity, I'd better do the thing I didn't have a chance to do when I was younger: Learn drawing from the inside out. Learn anatomy and perspective. And people will notice that that's when I started to slow down. I couldn't produce three-and-a-half books a month anymore, because I wasn't faking it.

You're ending your run inking Dan Jurgens' *Teen Titans* series with issue #15. How was that experience?

Well, I turned down an offer for creative input—this is Dan's book, and I was there strictly to embellish the artwork. But I enjoyed working with Dan. And one of the reasons for doing it was that I needed to prove not only to myself but to the industry that I can maintain a monthly schedule. I'm sure there were people who were reluctant to have me inking Dan, because I had developed this reputation as the Orson Welles of comics: [*Grandiosely*] "BIG PROJECT PLANNED WITH MAJOR TALENT!" And I wasn't finishing them for whatever reason. *Infinity Gauntlet* I didn't finish. There was a Titans graphic novel that I worked on for three years but never finished. I hadn't maintained a monthly schedule on any book for—gosh, it was closing in on a decade. I knew that Dan and [*Titans* editor] Eddie Berganza went out on a limb to get me this project, and I didn't want to betray that faith. So I worked my hardest and



Some Avengers, like Scarlet Witch (below), have gone retro with Pérez's redesigns.

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Earth's Snazziest Heroes

When it comes to the latest in Avengers' wear, George Pérez is going retro.

"Without sounding like we're just being nostalgic old fogeys, the sense I felt we needed to get in *The Avengers* is that this is a *return*," Pérez says. "So I'm avoiding major costume changes for the group, unless it's to go back to a retro look. The goal is to make them look familiar, not unfamiliar." That said, here are Pérez's personal picks for the five coolest-looking Avengers ever:

• **CAPTAIN AMERICA**–"It's like saluting the flag—he's just so iconic, drawing him makes you feel like you're part of a rich heritage."

• **THE SCARLET WITCH**–"Just a truly sexy-looking character. I've always enjoyed drawing her."

• **THE VISION**–"Specifically, the Vision's face. To me, he was the one character created specifically to be an Avenger. He was used on the masthead for quite a while, and he really became the symbol of the group. If I don't draw him, I'm really not fully drawing the Avengers."

• **HAWKEYE**–"His costume looks cool and utilitarian. People do sometimes get too carried away with the loincloth, though—he looks like he's going to trip over the damn thing!"

• **THE BEAST**–"He has no costume, just the biggest fur coat in the world. I've noticed that he's gotten to look more bestial and less jovial than he did when I was first drawing *Avengers*, but I still tend to draw him with a rather comical face. I've missed that little monkey man." ■*TR*

"The Avengers are Marvel's version of the Knights of the Round Table. By trying to copy the success of the X-Men, people were making the Avengers something they weren't."

managed to stay on the book. And I have to do the same thing with *The Avengers*.

Given that you've had the chops to be the definitive artist at both Marvel and DC at different points in your career, have you ever done any design work outside of comics?

I used to do some community theater work, designing scenery and making costume suggestions. Oh, and I was once asked to design a monster's face for a horror movie—I didn't even know it was actually used until I saw an ad for it in one of these video catalogs showing, you know, "any schlock film for $10.99." I spotted the names of the two makeup artists that I had done the sketch for—and sure enough, there was the monster I designed! For a very cheap movie whose name totally escapes me. [*Laughs*] I did it as a favor to them because they had done the makeup for me when I played Daddy Warbucks in a theater production of "Annie."

Daddy Warbucks?!

They did a very convincing bald cap for me. I looked like Lex Luthor. [*Laughs*]

Any other new and unusual credits you'd still like to add to your résumé?

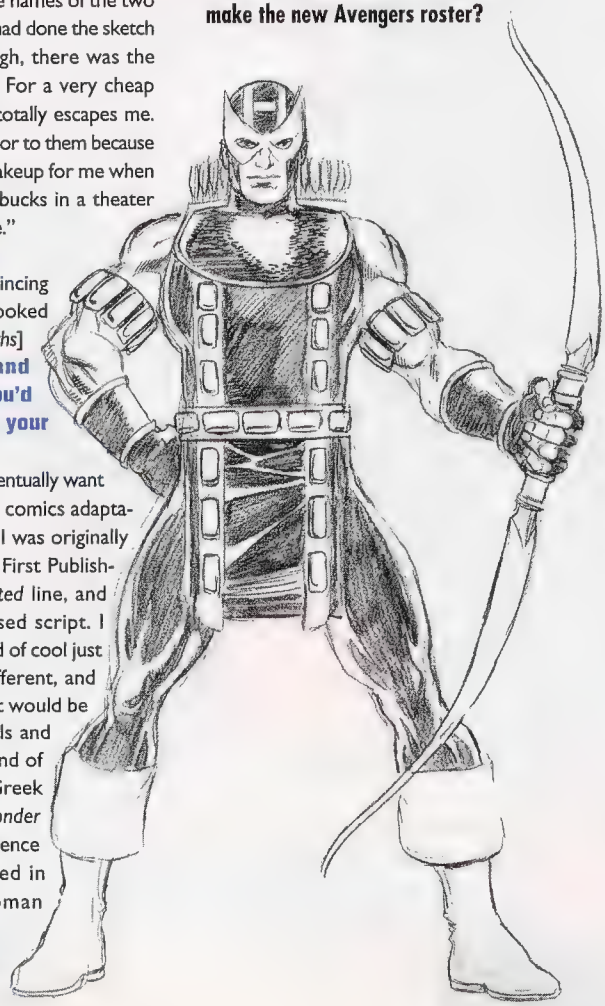
One project that I eventually want to get around to is a comics adaptation of *Julius Caesar*. I was originally going to do this for First Publishing's *Classics Illustrated* line, and even had a condensed script. I think it would be kind of cool just to try something different, and to do something that would be distributed in schools and have lasting value. And of course after doing Greek architecture for *Wonder Woman*, all that reference makes me interested in taking on the Roman milieu.

Sounds ambitious.

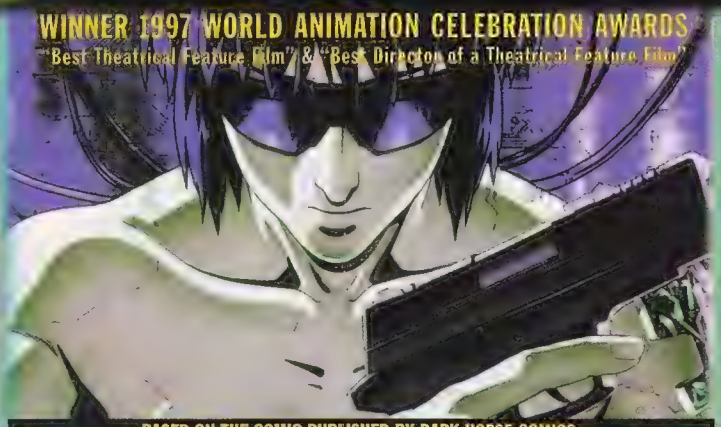
Well, the one thing I've always wanted—from the very first page I drew when I started to my current stuff—is for my next work to be my best work. That's what I try to do. I try to do my best, and hopefully improve just through my sheer desire to keep on drawing. W

California-based writer Tom Russo once had a young fan tell him that he would be the next Fred Hembeck.

Will the redesigned Hawkeye, a favorite of both Pérez and Busiek, make the new Avengers roster?



Sizzling New Animé From



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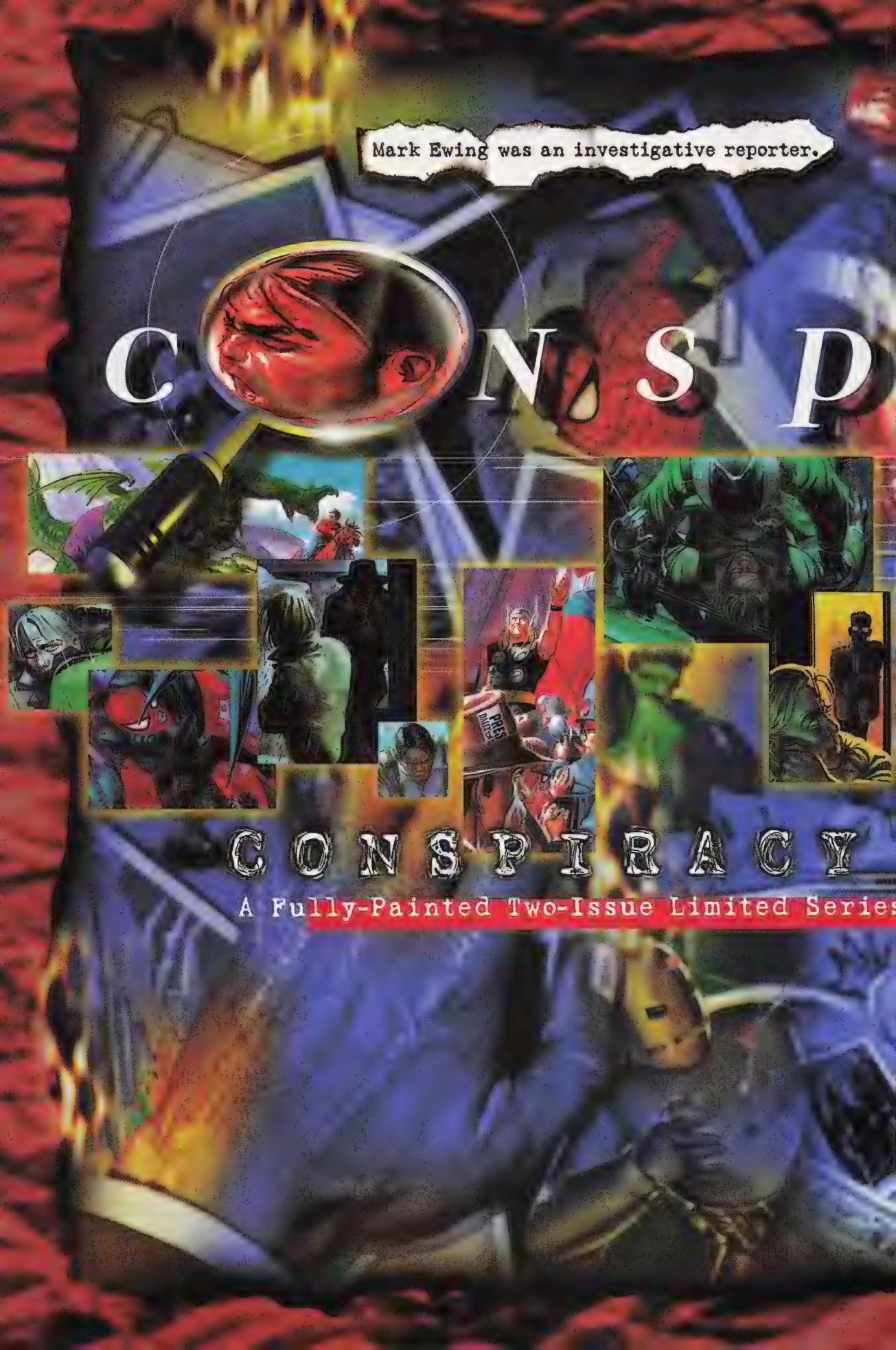
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CHARACTER PROFILE:

Catwoman

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

Real Name: Selina Kyle
Age: Late 20s
Height: 5' 7"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Hair Color: Black
Eye Color: Green
First Appearance: original version, *Batman* #1 (1940); modern version, *Batman* #404 (1987)
Title Currently Appearing in: *Catwoman*
Major Enemies: Joker, Two-Face, Penguin, Batman, Cyber-Cat and Morella

ORIGIN

Orphaned at an early age, young Selina Kyle was raised as a ward of the state by an orphanage's tyrannical headmistress, after trying to survive on the tough streets of Gotham City. Developing a strong sense of independence and self-sufficiency as she grew into teenagehood, Kyle was nearly killed by the headmistress before she escaped, freeing the other girls as well.

After escaping, Kyle returned to the streets of Gotham, planning to make it on her own and look out only for herself. During her time alone, Kyle befriended many cats, admiring them for their agility and independence, and refined her natural gymnastic talents. During her time on her own, Kyle also turned to burglary, partly to support herself, but mostly for the thrill. Having discovered at the orphanage, and as she grew older, that she had a natural aptitude for thievery, Kyle stole from Gotham's wealthiest citizens, and set herself up in a very affluent lifestyle as a result of fencing the goods she stole.

Seeking to raise the adventure in her life to a higher level, and to protect her identity at the same time, Kyle was inspired by Gotham's own Batman, a vigilante who played by his own rules while maintaining his anonymity. Donning a clawed cat costume, Kyle began a new life as Catwoman.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since taking up the role of Catwoman, the carefree Kyle has grown accustomed to affluence, and in her civilian identity has moved in and out of the wealthiest social circles with ease, often befriending those who would later become her victims. For a period of time, Selina had the reputation of being the "bad girl" of the Gotham social scene, and even counted Bruce Wayne among her romantic acquaintances.

Clearly in the game only for herself, Kyle has managed to elude capture by remaining just outside the law, and therefore just outside the full attention of Batman. During her career, Kyle has aligned herself with some of the world's most notorious criminals, such as Bane and others who would hire her for "retrieval" of specific objects from various people and places.

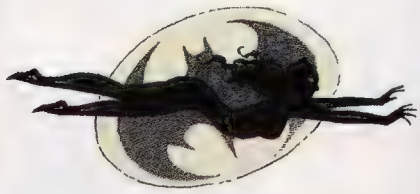
Though Kyle may act the part of the criminal most often, she is not inherently evil. Simply, she follows her own set of rules. While her own rules frequently have her stealing from others for her own gain, she will not harm innocents, will protect the unjustly persecuted, and has often formed uneasy alliances with heroes such as Batman to achieve a common goal.

As an individual player, Kyle feels no loyalty whatsoever to members of Batman's rogues gallery, and has frequently found herself pitted against the Dark Knight's worst enemies as a result.

Kyle's style was slightly cramped recently when Commissioner Gordon ordered special agent Moreland McShane, a one-man task force, to study Catwoman's crimes and bring her in. Not realizing her costumed alias, McShane hired Kyle herself as his assistant in discovering more about Catwoman. Confounding matters even more, Kyle and McShane have begun to feel—and acted upon—a romantic attraction toward each other.

Recently, Kyle has gone up against Two-Face, She-Cat (a childhood friend of Kyle, who seeks to be just like her in every way) and the international terrorist organization S.P.I.D.E.R., of which Kyle declined membership.

In one of her most recent escapades, Kyle wore specialized sleek armor to take down Cyber-Cat, after a severe beating at Cyber-Cat's hands. While her battle with Cyber-Cat forced her to take a grimmer edge than her normal carefree attitude, Kyle shed her impromptu armor after defeating Cyber-Cat. Once again taking up her regular costume, Kyle has returned to her role of the crook with a conscience, constantly walking the fine line between hero and villain.



UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Catwoman's world will be slightly shaken up with the arrival of new writer Devin Grayson with *Catwoman* #54. "I want to continue building a supporting cast, and explore her loner tendencies as well," Grayson says. "This woman has gone though a lot of trouble to be as anonymous as possible—why is that, and what does that say about her psyche? I also want to do some grounding with the day-to-day details of her life—how does she get out of her apartment at night, what does she want in life and what does she need to get there?"

Kyle will soon have a close encounter with fear. "We'll be examining some of her fears, and that should suggest a guest-star," Grayson chuckles. "There's going to be some one-shot capers, getting her back into some criminal activity, and seeing her doing her thing without a lot of other interference."

Also, look for some more Bat-foes to show up along the way. "We're hopefully going to be playing with the Joker and the Scarecrow," Grayson says. "They're favorite villains of mine, and I'd love to see how she interacts with them. But she's had so many guest-stars lately, we're looking forward to getting her out on her own for a while. That's the first order of business, no guest-stars. Let's see what she can do on her own."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Looking for some killer Catwoman tails...uh, tales? Be sure to check out these flavors of cat-chow:

- ***Batman* #404-#407**—In "Batman: Year One," see the modern Selina Kyle become Catwoman, and how she made enemies of a rookie Batman and Gotham's mob boss The Roman.
- ***Catwoman* #0**—"Cat Shadows" features the full version of Catwoman's origin, detailing how a troubled child turned out to be one of the world's greatest cat-burglars.
- ***Catwoman* #15-#18**—Titled "Catfile," Catwoman is forced to steal for a secret government agency that's planted a bomb inside her to control her. Yeah, right. A great, action-filled, globe-spanning ride.
- ***Hitman* #16-#20**—What would you do if you teamed up with Catwoman? Hitman Tommy Monaghan needs a demon-killing gun stolen, so who better to call than Catwoman? Check this one out for great dialogue and a realistic response to a hot babe running around in tights. (Let's just say that Monaghan's distracted a lot.)
- ***Batman: The Long Halloween***—Set in the year following "Batman: Year One," this 13-issue tale has Selina Kyle as a supporting character throughout. See her in her early days as Catwoman and as the unlikely rescuer and temptress of Bruce Wayne. W

Freelance writer Matthew Brady used to be the "bad boy" of the North Carolina social scene until he decided to write articles 18 hours a day.

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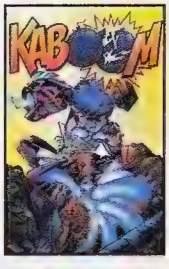

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We have the rare gold variant cover! Limited to only 5,000 copies!

KAB2G 2 (Rare - Limit 2) $3

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This limited comic features the 1st appearance of the Men in Black!

MBIL 1 (Limited comic) $3

Mage #0

This exclusive comic features a new 10-pg story that introduces Joe Phatt! Matt Wagner art!

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Myst #0

Strictly limited to only 20,000 copies! Features a new adventure based on the best-selling game!

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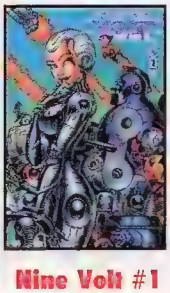

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This 1st issue introduces Nine Volt! Get a limited variant cover for only $3!

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Star Wars: Fall of the Sith #1

The rare variant cover! Star Wars titles are hot! A can't miss at only $3!

SWFSIL 1 (Rare variant cover) $3

The Tenth #1
Limited cover

The Tenth returns as a regular series! A rare exclusive cover!

TENNIL 1 (Variant cover) .. $3

The Tenth #0
Exclusive Comic

This rare comic features the origin of The Tenth! Tony Daniel art!

TEN0 0 (Limited comic) $3

Witchblade Encore
Exclusive Comic

It's not a dream! This limited comic features art by Michael Turner! And it's only $3!

WITB2L 2 (Limited comic) $3

Witchblade/Elektra
Limited Cover

This limited comic has an exclusive new cover by Joe Benitez! Hurry, at $3, it won't last long!

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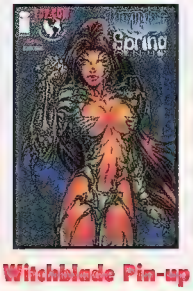

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This rare limited comic features exotic images of Witchblade by top artists like Mike Turner!

WBSFI 1 (Limited comic) $3

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While supplies last, you can get this exclusive photo cover of Xena & Gabrielle for only $3!

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This exclusive limited variant comic features the shocking story of Magneto's origin!

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Rare Limited Comics

Chastity
Limited Cover

This extremely limited edition of **Chastity 2** features a new cover by Steven Hughes!

CHAS2L **2** (Rare variant cover) **$5**

Coven #1
Limited Cover

This series by Jeph Loeb & artist Ian Churchill is hot! This rare variant cover is only $5!

COV1L **1** (Variant - Limit 2) **$5**

Coven #2
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We still have copies of the super-rare gold logo variant cover! Limited to only 5,000 copies! Hot!

COV2G **1** (Rare - Limit 2).....**$5**

Divine Right
Variant Preview

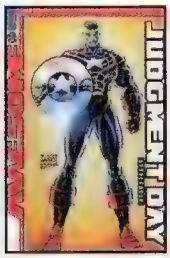
This variant preview comic features the 1st appearance of Divine Right! Very Rare!

DRP1L **1** (Rare variant cover) **$10**

Gen13 Bikini
Exclusive Comic

This exclusive comic by top artists features the beautiful Gen13 girls in skimpy swimwear!

GENBK1 **1** (Limited comic).....**$5**



Judgment Day
Sourcebook

The comic that sparked a lawsuit with Marvel! The first appearance of the Fighting American!

JDDS1 **1** (Exclusive comic)....**$5**

Pakkins' Land
Exclusive Comic

A boy enters a world of talking animals! This acclaimed title is hot!

PK0L **0** (Limited comic) **$5**

Star Wars #0
Exclusive Comic

Luke, Leia & the droids set off on a dangerous mission! Chaykin art!

SW0 **0** (Rare limited comic) ..**$10**

Tenth #1
Variant Cover

This rare exclusive variant cover of the first issue of the mini-series is hot!

TEN1L **1** (Rare variant - Lim 2) **$10**

Witchblade #18
Variant Cover

An exclusive limited variant cover by Mike Turner! Very rare!

WITB18L **1** (Variant cover) **$5**

Witchblade Origin

This rare exclusive comic features a cover by Mike Turner & art by Marc Silvestri!

WITB0 **1** (Rare exclusive) **$10**

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Get two of the rarest X-Files comics ever for only $5! Limit 1 each!

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___	MS0L	**Myst 0** (Exclusive Limited comic)	**$3** = ___
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___	WITB2L	**Witchblade Encore 2** (Limited comic)	**$3** = ___
___	WBSF1	**Witchblade Limited Pin-up**	**$3** = ___
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JUNK DRAWER

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

Spider-Man Limited Edition Set

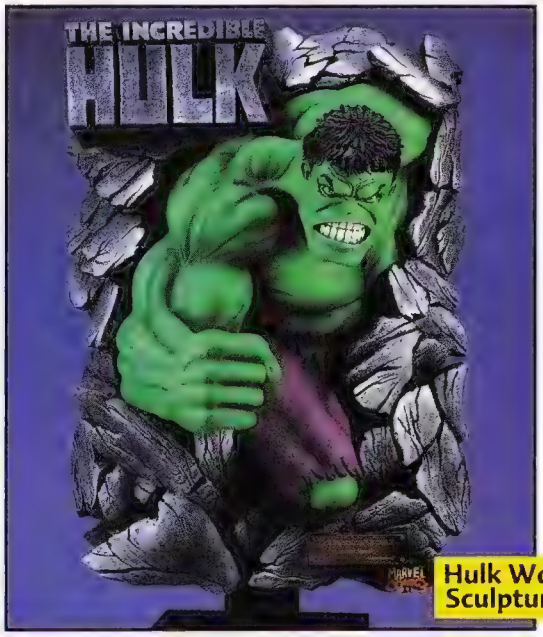
SPIDEY IN A BOX

It's party time, as November's Spider-Man Limited Edition Set ($100) celebrates the 35th anniversary of Spider-Man and the 75th birthday of his co-creator, Stan Lee. This collector's boxed set contains a hardcover reproduction of *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (The first appearance of that wacky wall-crawler!), a collectible die-cut CD featuring an interview and reading of the story by Lee, and a special commemorative Spider-Man ring. This set, from Applewood Books, is limited to just 2,500 copies and will be sold at discerning comic book shops.

UNCLE SAM, BANNER MAN

Prove you're a red-blooded American this December by hangin' DC Comics' Uncle Sam Banner ($44.95) on your wall! Tied to the release of Vertigo's *Uncle Sam* mini-series, this 24" X 36" satin banner features Sam bursting out of the American flag, as painted by Alex Ross! It comes with two grommets (nifty li'l metal circles), enabling it to be displayed without being damaged.

Alex Ross Uncle Sam Banner



Hulk Wall Sculpture

HULK SMASH WALL!

Illusive Concepts brings you the Incredible Hulk Wall Sculpture ($350) showing the Green Goliath literally bursting from a sculpture that can be hung on any wall. Limited to 5,000 pieces, it comes hand-finished in eight colors, measures 23" X 30.5" X 15" and weighs roughly 25 pounds. Each sculpture includes an individually engraved-and-numbered brass plaque, a signed certificate of authenticity and a descriptive color brochure. Look for it in specialty comic stores this November.

A CHAOS! CHRISTMAS

This Christmas, look for the Chaos! Comics Christmas

Chaos! Comics Christmas Cards

Cards in specialty comic book shops. The set contains six full-color greeting cards in which Chaos! characters celebrate the season in their own evil way. From Evil Ernie eating reindeer to Lady Death seducing Santa Claus, they're all here for $7.50 a set.

VINYL TICKS!

Throw away that crappy Garfield sticking to your car's back window and get a soft vinyl Tick doll (from New England Comics) instead. Made in full color, complete with a Tick logo on the back and attached suction cups, this doll comes in two sizes: 11 inches ($5.99) or 14 inches ($11.99). Look for 'em both in comic book shops everywhere in November.

Product of the Month

THE ART OF WOLVERINE

WildStorm Fine Arts brings beauty to the beast, presenting a high-quality Iris Print of the X-Men's Wolverine in all his glory. Showcasing exclusive, all-new artwork by Jim Lee, Wolvie's looking pretty pissed off as he stands over a pile of human skulls. Printed on Arches watercolor paper, the picture has a total print size (including border) of 22" X 28". Wolvie is limited to 300 signed and numbered units, available in specialty comic book stores in November for $150.

Vinyl Tick Dolls in Two Sizes

Vampirella/Dracula Poster

VAMPING ART

Harris Comics brings you two ways to bloody up your room this November. First, look for the Vampirella Jae Lee Lithograph. This high-quality lithograph printed on aqueous watercolor paper, features artwork by Jae Lee, measures 18" X 25", is limited to 1,000 copies and comes in a regular version ($16.95) or a deluxe signed-and-numbered one ($29.95). There's also the painted Vampirella/ Dracula Poster ($6.95) by John Bolton. This all-new 22" X 34" poster features Vampirella leaning on the King of Vampires.

HATS OFF TO GEN13

Just in time for cold weather, keep an eye out this winter for the Gen13 Knit Beanie-Style Hats ($20.95) from WildStorm Productions. Featuring an embroidered Gen13 logo, these puppies are available in black, maroon and navy blue—one size fits all.

Gen13 Hats

Ranma 1/2 Mug

RANMA 1/2 AND HALF

Viz Comics' Ranma 1/2 Cappuccino Mug ($16.95) is the coolest container for your hottest liquids. This oversized 14-ounce ceramic mug features a full-color wraparound image of all your favorite Ranma 1/2 characters! It's currently available in specialty comic shops everywhere.

A FUNKY SHI-SHIRT

Crusade Comics captures the sexiest ninja around on a navy blue T-shirt made of 100 percent cotton, which shows Shi brandishing a deadly blade. Available in L and XL sizes, these shirts hit comic stores this December for $19.95.

Shi T-shirt

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out some super-groovy good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like Dr. Doom's "Create Your Own Doombot" Kit, Resurrection Man's *Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead* CD and Fantastic Four Packs of Cheese? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our equally super-groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

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151 Wells Ave.
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JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

A VIDEO-GAME MIRACLE

Crank up the PlayStation and set the volume on your TV to 11. Disconnect your phone and tell your boss you're taking the week off—Acclaim and Capcom have released *Fantastic Four* and *Marvel Super Heroes*, two relatively solid video games based on Marvel characters. Put these puppies together with the mega-hit-to-be *Final Fantasy 7*, and one thing's perfectly clear—November is going to be a *very* good month for video-game fans clamoring for quality titles.

Fantastic Four

MANUFACTURER: Acclaim
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Fantastic Four is first and foremost a 2-D side-scrolling fighting/adventure game—not half as 3-D as Acclaim would lead fans to believe. The game asks players (up to four people can play at one time) to take the part of Marvel's oldest superhero team, battling through five levels to get to the game's top villain (Who else?) Dr. Doom.

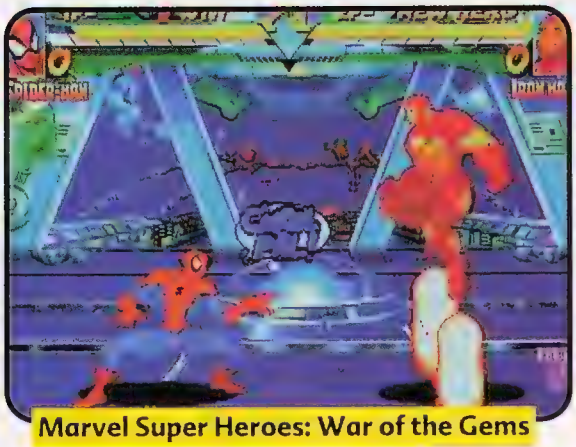
Fantastic Four shows some promise. The graphics are occasionally stunning, creating for the first time in a Marvel video game, the feeling of walking through the Marvel Universe. The game's opening level, where the team members walk through a dark, New York City street is a near delight to behold.

Users can play as Mr. Fantastic, The Thing, Invisible Woman, Human Torch or She-Hulk. In the course of the game, players are forced to fight such superbaddies as The Mole Man, Namor the Sub-Mariner, Super-Skrull, Psycho-Man and Doom himself. In addition, Acclaim says the level breaks contain surprise cameo appearances by characters like Dragon Man and the Incredible Hulk.

Acclaim did a fine job of inscribing the FF with varied looks and special moves. Each member has four unique attacks. Among others, Mr. Fantastic can stretch into a 10-ton weight, She-Hulk can generate a gamma force shield, Invisible Woman has force balls, The Thing can perform a thunder-clap and Human Torch can go super-nova.

A common flaw of side-scrollers, however, is that the game's drones appear in endless waves, inflicting enough cheap damage to take out the toughest player-controlled characters. In this case, the Mole Man's tiny henchmen litter the first level,

Fantastic Four



Marvel Super Heroes: War of the Gems

Final Fantasy 7

and are capable of destroying the near-invincible She-Hulk and heavily armored Thing. In the context of the Marvel Universe, this makes no sense and causes the game to suffer.

Fantastic Four is a bit difficult and will provide a decent challenge, but after you've seen all the levels, there's really no replay value.

Marvel Super Heroes: War of the Gems

MANUFACTURER: Capcom
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

A direct port-over of the crowd-pleasing arcade game, *Marvel Super Heroes* is a very satisfying 2-D *Street Fighter*-type game and a perfect translation, to boot.

The game's mechanics are quite simple. Users select a character from a list of 10 heroes and villains, including Captain America, Spider-Man, Hulk, Psylocke, Iron Man, Magneto, Shuma Gorath, Wolverine, Juggernaut and Blackheart. The game asks players to pound on all the other characters, punching, kicking, throwing and slamming them into oblivion. Players can string together a series of punches and kicks to form multi-hit combos. Each character also has his own super attacks—Captain America will, for example, grab an opponent, jump into the air and slam him to the ground, while shouting, "Final Justice!"

When a player gets through with the selectable characters, bosses like Dr. Doom and Thanos await. Along the way, players can collect Infinity Gems to boost their strength, create super-armor, regain lost health and perform other special tasks.

There are a few additions to the home version that make it even better than its arcade cousin. In the arcade, players couldn't access Dr. Doom or Thanos, but in the home version, they're selectable characters. According to Capcom, after you've defeated all 12 characters, you can use a code to play as Doom or Thanos forever more. (See sidebar.)

Marvel Super Heroes is as fun as a two-player game can be for two comic book fans. The only real knock, however, is that the battles are over way too quickly, and a lot of the damage that accrues seems to be assigned at random.

Final Fantasy 7

MANUFACTURER: Squaresoft
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $59.99, available now

A true role-playing game (RPG), *FF7* is the greatest game ever released for the PlayStation.

Incredible eye-candy, three CDs full of gameplay and eye-popping full-motion video scenes are just a few of the standouts of Japan's best-selling RPG series. Unlike anything you've seen before, *FF7* is an epic adventure filled with more than 50 hours of movie-like special effects and 3-D graphics.

The game is a 3-D adventure, with lushly painted terrains and graphically gorgeous landscapes and buildings. Characters must explore the strange new lands, talk to weird folks and fight their way through splendidly animated real-time battles. Players control three characters in battle, and during the adventures, new members will join a party as others leave. In battle, players have the option of fighting with weapons, summoning creatures, using an item, running, using magic, waiting or defending. As each character moves through the game, his attributes improve and he becomes stronger and more adept at fighting.

Final Fantasy 7 is the only game players will need for at least a month—and then some. A ton of side missions and non-essential areas provide hours of additional replay value. The PlayStation finally has met the challenge of Nintendo 64's *Super Mario64*.

IT'S YOUR MOVE

SPECIAL MOVES AND SECRET CODES

Starting this month, we're going to give you video-game junkies what you crave: move lists and secret codes to boost your gameplay. Here's a bunch of moves and codes to get you started with some of the characters in Capcom's ***Marvel Super Heroes: War of the Gems*** for the PlayStation and Sega Saturn.

• All characters:	**Select Gem**	start
	Use Gem	down, left, right + all punch buttons
	Super Jump	up, down or all kick buttons
	Super Attack	down, down right, right + all kicks or all punches
• Juggernaut	**Earthquake**	down, down left, left + any punch
	Juggernaut Splash	down, down right, right + any kick
• Psylocke	**Psychic Attack**	down, down right, right + any punch
	Cochou Gakore	right, down right, down, down left, left + all kicks
• Spider-Man	**Spider Sting**	right, down, down right + any punch
	Web Ball	down, down right, right + any punch
• Wolverine	**Drill Claw**	jab + short kick, strong punch + forward or fierce punch + roundhouse kick
	Berserker Barrage	down, down right, right + any punch

To play Thanos and Doctor Doom, here's all you have to do. Just remember, these codes will work on both the Saturn *and* PlayStation versions, but the button configurations will be different for each system.

- Complete the game once.
- Enter the following codes (the short-cut option must be turned OFF) on the character select screen:

To play as Dr. Doom... Push down, down, then hold down L kick, M kick and then H kick. Each button must be held down for the code to work.

To play as Thanos... Push up, up, then hold down H punch, M punch and then L punch. Each button must be held down for the code to work.

The "Be a Professional Inker" Contest

CONT'D

How To Play

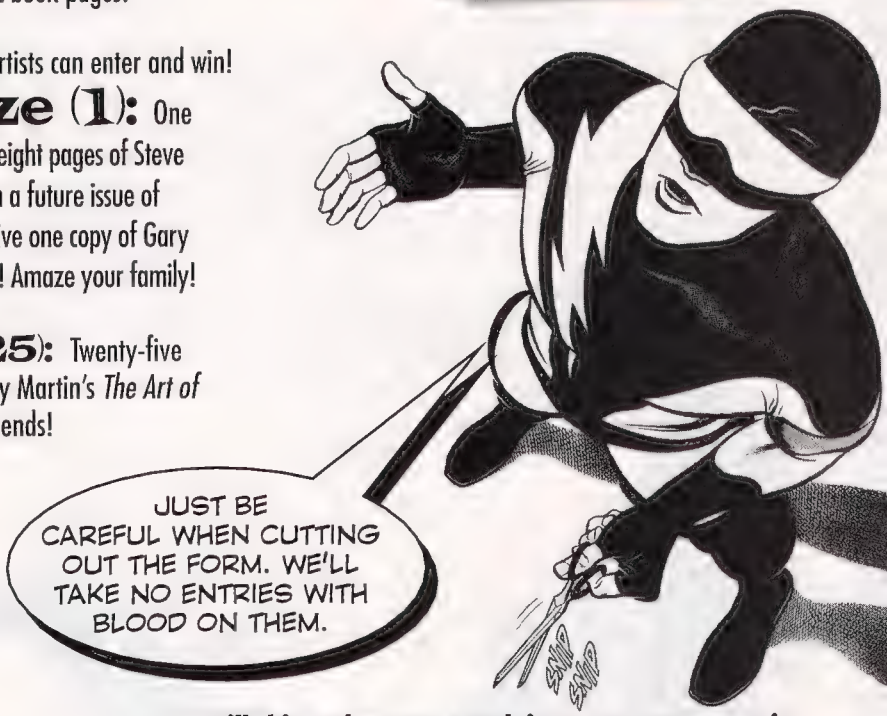
Hey, you've always wanted to be a professional comic book artist, right? Sure you have! Who hasn't?! Well, Gary Martin's new book *The Art of Comic Book Inking* is a sure way to learn how to hone your artistic abilities and get on the fast track to becoming a professional inker. It's chock full o' detailed explanations on drawing implements, artistic approaches and insider tricks!

With this here contest, we want to give you a head start on inking. See that penciled illustration to the left? That's your sample page. Make a good, clean photocopy of it on some decent paper. Then go to work! (We recommend using vellum or tracing paper.) Ink the page as best you can. Pay special attention to detail and, most importantly, take your time! The best entry will go on to ink actual Steve Rude comic book pages!

Sorry, no professional comic book artists can enter and win!

Grand Prize (1): One winner will get the opportunity to ink eight pages of Steve Rude's "Moth Man" story, to appear in a future issue of *Dark Horse Presents*. They'll also receive one copy of Gary Martin's *The Art of Comic Book Inking*! Amaze your family!

Second Prize (25): Twenty-five readers will receive one copy of Gary Martin's *The Art of Comic Book Inking*! Impress your friends!



This contest is sponsored by Dark Horse, nice people from the Northwest.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it off to: Be an Inker Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is December 31, 1997.

Dark, Dark, Legal Matters

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Horse, professional comic book artists, their immediate families and sock puppets. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Be An Inker Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Muppets are flammable. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Contest will be judged by Gary Martin. Winning entries will be selected on or about January 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Be An Inker Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Inker Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your entry?

THE TOY CHEST

BY **TOM PALMER JR.**

FINALLY! GEN13 TOYS!

Jim Lee is ready to storm into toy stores.

After months of rumors and speculation, Lee has announced WildStorm will throw its hat into the action figure ring and produce toys based on several popular WildStorm characters. The figures will initially be offered as retailer incentives throughout the first half of 1998, kicking off with Gen13's leggy team leader **Fairchild**. Lee confirmed that other possibilities for WildStorm figures include J. Scott Campbell's new Danger Girl, an unnamed character from Lee's new fantasy comic *Divine Right*, WildCORE's Backlash and Gen13's punkish teen **Freefall**.

Retailers will be able to grab Fairchild in conjunction with the release of *Gen13* #25 in December, although the figure won't be sold in stores until April. The next WildStorm figure will most likely be offered as an incentive with the debut of the new *WildCORE* series in February, with new figures probably being offered bimonthly after that. After all the figures have been offered as retailer incentives, six-figure cases will be available in late summer.

These comic store offerings are hopefully just a prelude to bigger and better things from WildStorm. Once the "Gen13" direct-to-video movie and *Gen13* Sony PlayStation video game make their debut in 1998, WildStorm will have the tie-ins necessary to get its figures a place in large toy store chains like Toys R Us and Kay-Bee.

Each figure will stand six inches tall, but no prices have been determined yet. Keep yer eyes peeled right here in the next few months for pics as they're completed.

MIKE HEISLER • TOM RANEY • RANDY ELLIOTT
DV8
#14
DV8 GOES LEGIT?
As DV8 joins the WildStorm, New Horizon Line-up, Ivana has Taken control of International Operations. What will happen when the deviants work within the law?
COMING IN DECEMBER!
CHECK OUT THE SPECIAL PREVIEW OF J. SCOTT CAMPBELL'S Danger Girl IN THE VOYAGER PACK EDITION OF DV8 #14
WILDSTORM
DV8 is TM & © Aegis Entertainment, Inc., dba WildStorm Productions, 1997. All Rights Reserved.

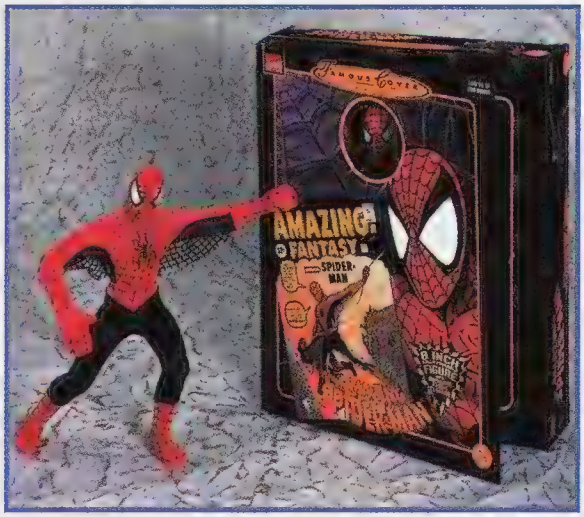
TOY BIZ UNVEILS MORE FAMOUS COVERS

The buzz around Toy Biz's new line of 8-inch Famous Covers figures is growing, and the toys haven't even hit stores yet!

Toy Biz recently unveiled pictures of the first assortment and its deluxe packaging, set to ship in November. All the bugs have been worked out of the prototypes (shown in *Wizard* #73's "Toy Chest") for the first set of these Mego-style figures of Wolverine, Spider-Man, Storm and Green Goblin. And, as a nifty extra, Toy Biz will be offering a mail-in **Aunt May** figure, sadly *sans* her famous wheatcakes. Check out the inside flap of the Famous Covers' gate fold boxes for ordering info!

Work has already begun on a second Famous Covers assortment, which will include **Doctor Doom**, **Hellcat**, **Thor** and **Captain America**. All of these deluxe figures come with detailed clothing and accessories, as well as a few cool extras. Doom will be fitted with flexible armor, to preserve the multi-point articulation of the rest of the line, while Cap carries his trusty shield and features a removable cowl that reveals the patriotic mug of Steve Rogers underneath. Look for these guys to hit stores in March.

Aunt May special mail-in premium



Spider-Man Famous Covers

Green Goblin Famous Covers

Storm Famous Covers

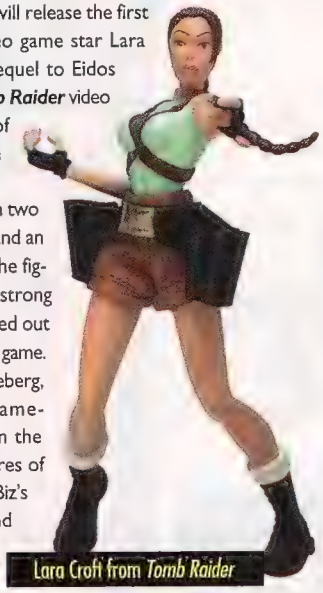
Wolverine Famous Covers

RAIDERS OF THE LOST TOMB

She's sold millions of video games, danced with Bono during U2's Pop Mart tour and even has her own website full of nude pictures. She's **Lara Croft** and she's poised to take over the toy market.

This November, Toy Biz will release the first action figure of popular video game star Lara Croft, just in time for the sequel to Eidos Interactive's phenomenal ***Tomb Raider*** video game. Lara will carry a ton of weapons, including a pistol, an Uzi, a streetsweeper and an M-16, and she'll be packed with two creature companions—a bat and an Atlantean skinless demon. If the figure goes over well, there's a strong possibility the line will be fleshed out with more characters from the game.

Lara's just the tip of the iceberg, though, as far as video game-oriented action figures go. In the coming months, look for figures of ReSaurus' Duke Nukem, Toy Biz's X-Men vs. Street Fighter and Resident Evil.



Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Galoob's got the toy license to Paul Verhoeven's eagerly anticipated fall sci-fi flick "Starship Troopers," and the company's all set to invade toy stores with tons o' bugs, army guys and funky spaceships. There will be a line of 5 3/4-inch figures including Mega Marauder Johnny Rico, Bug Thrasher Carmen Ibanez, Toxic Raider Ace Levy, Firestorm Johnny Rico, Jetpack Ace Levy, Cyber Commando Sugar Watkins, as well as a TAC Fighter vehicle and 11-inch Warrior Bug. Also look for six Battle Packs in the Action Fleet line, and a line of Deluxe Action Fleet toys, including Plasma Bug with Ace Levy and Cap Trooper; TAC Fighter with Carment and MI Pilot; Retrieval Ship with MI Pilot and Medic; and more. Also look for three collections of Starship Troopers Micro Machines, each with two bugs, a vehicle and two figures.

AWESOME GETS SHAFTED

Hot on the heel's of Awesome Toys' **Prophet** action figure, look for Youngblood team leader **Shaft** to be making the jump from comic page to blister pack this December. The Shaft action figure will stand seven inches tall and come packed with a battle sword and bow. A special variant figure, with a new deco and extra weapon, will be offered in conjunction with the *Awesome's Holiday Special* comic book. Future offerings from Awesome will include **Fighting American, Glory** and a line based on **Re: Gex**.

Shaft

B'OMARR MONK UPDATE

Kenner's latest exclusive action figure, the B'omarr Monk, is finally open to orders from the general public. Kenner recently posted a special mailing address on its website **http://star-wars.hasbro.com**. If you don't have access to the web, here's the deal: For regular U.S. orders, send a check for $7.98 (payable to Hasbro Promotions & Direct Inc.) per figure to:

Special Internet B'omarr Monk Figure
P.O. Box 5502
Kalamazoo, MI 49003-5502

California residents add sales tax. Readers of *Wizard* should code their orders "SW2" to let Kenner know you saw the mailing instructions here.

If you're a Canadian, send a check for $11.74 (payable to Hasbro Promotions & Direct Inc.) per figure, plus applicable Canadian sales tax to:

Special Internet B'omarr Monk Figure,
Hasbro Direct Inc. Hasbro Canada Inc.
C.P. 267, Succ. A
Longueuil, Quebec, Canada J4H 3X6

Allow about six-to-eight weeks for delivery. There's no limit to how many Monk figures you can order, so go crazy! Kenner plans to keep making 'em until the offer expires on January 31, 1998.

B5 9-inch figures (from left):Captain Sheridan, Ambassador Delenn, and Ambassador G'Kar

BABYLON 5 TOYS!

Making up for the inexplicable lack of Babylon 5 merchandise out there, Exclusive Toy Products has announced it's gearing up for the first action figure line based on the popular sci-fi property. The fledgling toy company, known for its figures based on classic TV shows like "Gilligan's Island" and "Dukes of Hazzard," has announced a wealth of Babylon 5 toys. The first wave of a series of 9-inch B5 action figures will be in stores just in time for Christmas. Toys R Us will carry the first limited edition series of **Captain Sheridan**, **Ambassador Delenn** and **Ambassador G'Kar**, while Diamond Comics Distributors offers a line of three figures to comic book and hobby shops, including the **Centauri Vir**, the **Minbari Lennier** and **Ranger Marcus Cole**. The 9-inch figures, which will retail between $19.99 and $29.99, will feature detailed character likenesses, removable cloth costumes and a display base. In the spring of '98, look for some new 9-inch characters, as well as the initial Toys R Us line to be available through Diamond, and vice versa (although with certain variations on the figures). As for 6-inch figures, look for a line with molded clothing to hit this December from Exclusive Toy Products and WB Toys (Warner Bros.' new toy line). For more up-to-date information, check out Exclusive Toy Products on the web at **www.exclusivepremiere.com**. **W**

ToyFare *Assistant Editor Tom Palmer Jr. dreams of one day starring in his own blaxploitation movie, complete with authentic '70s funky wah-wah guitar theme.*

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
Cut through all the legal red tape and this toy line would be every fanboy's dream. Of course, it'd have to include Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate, Iron Lantern and Super Soldier. Just leave that Lobo the Duck monstrosity out and we'll be happy.

2) Blink (X-Men)
She's dead and couldn't be more popular. Toy Biz has gotta make a figure of everybody's favorite "Age of Apocalypse" mutant, complete with static-cling teleport portals and energy javelins.

3) X-Man (X-Men)
You know the drill. The time-displaced Nate Grey would have a light-up eye, snap-on TK blasts and share his blister pack with gal-pal Threnody.

4) Wonder Woman (DC Heroes)
If you think it'd be tough to make Amalgam figures, you'd have to cut through twice as much red tape to make a Wonder Woman figure. We don't care how, we just wanna see our favorite Amazon, complete with golden lasso, removable shield and *Kingdom Come* armor.

5) Bantha (Star Wars)
Those lowly Tusken Raiders need a stylin' ride, so why won't Kenner make a big furry Bantha? Give this woolly beast a multi-poseable Raider to fit on its back and he'd be all set to trudge through the sands of Tatooine.

6) Maggott (Marvel Heroes)
The newest addition to the X-Men is just dying to be made into an action figure. Give him some cyber-dentic maggots and this mysterious mutant would find a special place on our toy shelf.

7) Pitt
Who wouldn't buy an action figure of Dale Keown's big gray alien? This figure would have to have a gazillion little pointy teeth and come packed with his lil' buddy Timmy.

8) Alpha Flight Boxed Set (Marvel Heroes)
Not all Canadians drink beer and say, "oy." Some of 'em wear silly costumes and beat up bad guys. Hopefully Toy Biz'll take notice that Marvel's new *Alpha Flight* comic is burning up the charts and issue a box set of the newest incarnation of the team.

9) Darkchylde
Randy Queen's *Darkchylde* is always at the top of back-issue charts, so someone better wise up and make her into an action figure. Give her light-up eyes, some funky monster wings and a tattered skimpy T-shirt.

10) Ewoks (Star Wars)
Just about everyone hates these lil' furry buggers, but our Star Wars collection wouldn't be complete without 'em. Throw in some spears, rocks, a bow and arrow and this two-pack would be complete.

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

GRAND PRIZE

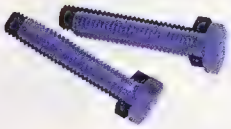
(FROM LEFT) GWEN STACY, FLASH THOMPSON, HARRY OSBORN, NORMAN OSBORN, MARY JANE WATSON-PARKER, PETER PARKER, J. JONAH JAMESON AND ROBBIE ROBERTSON

Michael Fichera of Secane, Pa.

There's not much room, so here goes: Michael created Gwen from a Playmates Star Trek Janice Rand body and a Tyco Cadillacs and Dinosaurs Hannah Dundee head, and made Flash from a Toy Biz Hercules Iolaus body and a Hasbro G.I. Joe Extreme Lt. Stone head. Harry is a Playmates Star Trek Captain Pike repaint, Norman combines a Playmates Dixon Hill Picard body and a Hasbro Lt. Stone head, Mary Jane was made from a Toy Biz Invisible Woman I body and a Playmates Star Trek Dax head, Peter is a Toy Biz Peter Parker with new hair, J. Jonah was created from a Toy Biz J. Jonah head with a Playmates Dixon Hill Picard body and Robbie was produced from a Kenner Congo Peter Elliot body and a Congo Monroe head.

All of these figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. The talented Grand Prize Winner swings away with four Polydata Star Wars model kits: Tusken Raider, Princess Leia, Ben Kenobi and Luke Skywalker. The Runner-Up scores three assorted Star Wars model kits, while everyone else gets one of 'em! Fine work, folks!

Many thanks to the Polydata people for the powerful prizes!

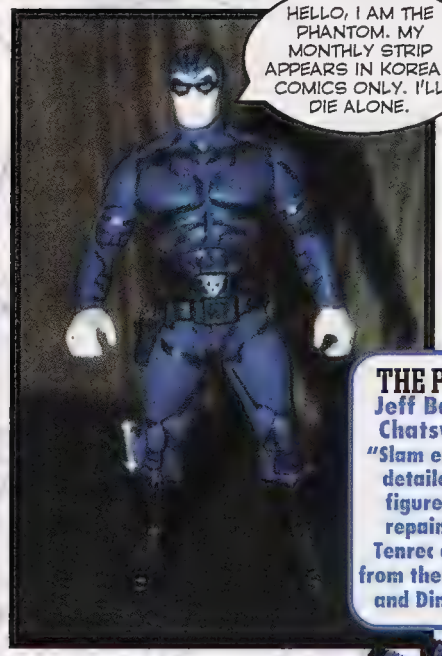


RUNNER-UP

KANO

John Mounce of Lincoln, Ark.

Sub-Zero, Johnny Cage, Sonya...feh! Bow down to this *Mortal Kombat 3* Kano, which John made by repainting a McFarlane Toys Chapel figure.



THE PHANTOM
Jeff Baldridge of Chatsworth, Ga.
"Slam evil" with this detailed Phantom figure created by repainting a Jack Tenrec action figure from the Tyco Cadillacs and Dinosaurs line.

BIGGS DARKLIGHTER
Scott Morrissey of Colonia, N.J.
Mixing a 1995 Kenner Power of the Force Han Solo figure with a Kenner 1983 Luke Jedi Knight figure, Biggs looks good enough to be a "special edition" figure. Get the pun...ahem.

HELLBOY
Ashley and Zach Oat of Noank, Conn.
Taking a Mattel He-Man Fisto action figure and adding a Playmates Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles utility belt, Hellboy takes shape with a customized hand-sculpted head and tail.

AMBIGUOUSLY GAY DUO
Tom Lotz of Naples, Fla.
The Ambiguously Gay Duo from "Saturday Night Live" comes to fruition here. Ace is a repainted Kenner Superman: Man of Steel Laser Superman and Gary is a former Toy Biz DC Comics Superheroes Riddler.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

HANGER 18 MAIL-ORDER

316-651-0044

24 HOUR FAX 316-689-0544

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VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER, CHECKS, & MONEY ORDERS ACCEPTED. ALL CHECKS ARE HELD FOR 10 BUSINESS DAYS. CREDIT CARD ORDERS ARE NOT CHARGED UNTIL ORDER IS RECEIVED FROM THE MANUFACTURER. PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE SHIPPING. SHIPPING VARIES BY PRODUCT WEIGHT, DESTINATION, & NUMBER OF ITEMS PURCHASED. PLEASE CALL BEFORE SENDING PAYMENT TO VERIFY CHARGES. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. RETURN ANY ITEM IN SAME CONDITION AS ORIGINALLY SHIPPED WITHIN 7 DAYS FOR PROMPT REFUND OR EXCHANGE. RETURN SHIPPING NOT INCLUDED IN REFUND. PLEASE CALL AHEAD TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS. THESE ARE APPROXIMATE RELEASE DATES. HANGER 18 IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR MANUFACTURER DELAYS IN DELIVERY, ERRORS IN PUBLICATION, NOR CHANGES TO PRODUCT MADE AFTER PUBLICATION.

STAR TREK

WAVE 2 — ITEM# 65100-2

WAVE 3 — ITEM# 65100-3

WE CARRY A WIDE SELECTION OF 5" FIGURES

ITEM# 64302

The Traviler, Interstellar Action Borg, Vash, Troi Durango, Interstellar Action Laforge, & Dax from Blood Oath

1701 SERIES 3-PACK

ITEM# 65100-3

COMBAT ACTION SERIES 6" FIGURES

REGIONAL SPECIAL

13 INCH VIOLATOR

LIMITED EDITION

SANSKER

McFARLANE TOYS

WETWORKS

ITEM# 12110

HALLOWEEN REPAINTS

MOORE ACTION COLLECTIBLES

ITEM# 55000

SPAWN

SERIES 9 MANGA

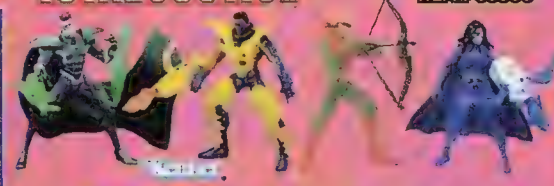
ITEM# 11110

McFARLANE TOYS

TOTAL JUSTICE

WAVE 3

ITEM# 63800



ULTRA TREK

QUEEN BORG

LOCUTUS

LIMITED EDITION

PUPPET MASTER

THE ACTION FIGURE SERIES

ITEM# 81001

RESERVE YOUR SET NOW!!

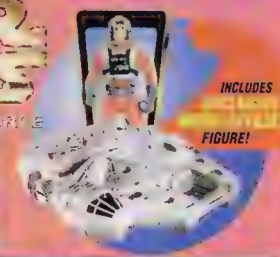
ROB LIEFELD'S YOUNGBLOOD

SHAFT

ITEM# 10032

STAR WARS

THE POWER OF THE FORCE



INCLUDES FIGURE!

DASH RENDAR'S OUTRIDER

NOW IN POTF — ITEM# 27728

GREEN PACKAGING

REPLACEMENT ACCESSORIES FOR OLD 3 3/4" FIGURES CALL FOR MORE INFO

MORE NEW STAR WARS ON IT'S WAY

WIDOW

RARE VARIANT AVAILABLE! CASE OF 6

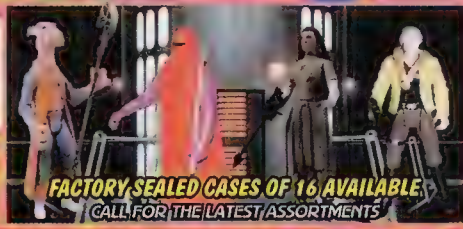
ITEM# 10021

BOLT

INTERNATIONAL PREMIUMS

ITEM# SSFF

NOT RELEASED IN THE U.S.



FACTORY SEALED CASES OF 16 AVAILABLE

CALL FOR THE LATEST ASSORTMENTS

MARVEL HALL OF FAME

SHEFORCE 3

Sheena, She-Devil, Elektra, Ghost-Slayer Girl, & Savage She-Hulk

ITEM# 48290

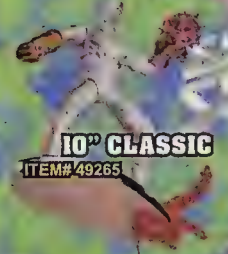
FAMOUS COVER SERIES

ITEM# 48490

SPIDER-MAN

WEB WARS

ITEM# 47520



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ITEM# 49265

6" CLASSIC SET

collect all 4 new figures

ITEM# 49270

ROGUES GALLERY

ITEM# 57392

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MAN-BAT

SCARECROW

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KILLER CROC

CATWOMAN

POISON IVY

CLAYFACE

PHANTASM

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Moon Knight

PandorA

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FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO ORDER THESE FIGURES:

CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT:

www.hanger18toys.com

Or call us at: 316-651-0044

WildStorm Productions Presents:

Write Your Own Divine Right #1/2

JIM LEE'S GOT A PROBLEM. Y'SEE, WILDSTORM'S HEAD HONCHO REALLY WANTS TO DO A #1/2 ISSUE FOR HIS NEW SERIES *DIVINE RIGHT: THE ADVENTURES OF MAX FARADAY*...BUT HE NEEDS A STORY. THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN.

JIM WANTS *YOU* TO WRITE HIS *DIVINE RIGHT* #1/2 PLOT. (BY THE WAY, A "PLOT" MEANS A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENS IN THE STORY.) SO NOW'S YER CHANCE TO BECOME A *REAL* COMIC PRO BY PLOTTING AN EIGHT-PAGE *DIVINE RIGHT* STORY!

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. Story must have a beginning, middle and end. Each story must be exactly eight pages, please.
2. No profanity, nudity or excessive violence. Keep entries PG-13!
3. Characters must act in accordance with their usual behavior.
4. It isn't necessary to include dialogue.
5. Be brief and to the point. Don't waste time on lengthy descriptions. Trust your artist. (He *is* Jim Lee, after all!)
6. And most importantly, DON'T FORGET TO TYPE AND DOUBLE-SPACE!

SORRY, BUT NO COMIC BOOK PROFESSIONALS MAY ENTER!

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will not only get the chance to write his own comic book, but he'll get to have Jim Lee draw it, too! He'll receive writing credit on the *Divine Right* #1/2 *and* he'll even get paid! Plus, he'll also receive a New Horizons convention poster and a full set of WildStorm's New Horizons relaunch books, signed by the creators!

First Prize (5): Five First Prize winners will receive a Horizons convention poster and a full set of WildStorm's New Horizons relaunch books, signed by the creators!

Second Prize (10): Ten Second Prize winners will receive a WildStorm's New Horizons convention poster.

This month's contest is sponsored by WildStorm Productions—a wild, *wild* bunch of people.

Fill this out, attach your plot and put it in an envelope. Send to: *Divine Right* #1/2 Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is December 31, 1997.

Legal Rights

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, WildStorm Productions, comic book professionals, their immediate families and whoever wrote that ending to the film version of "Event Horizon." That movie kicked ass for the first 75 percent, sucked ass for the last 25 percent. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: *Divine Right* #1/2 Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. WildStorm Productions will own all rights to winning story. Winner must sign a release form.All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Peas are tasty! **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about January 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: *Divine Right* #1/2 Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Divine Right #1/2 Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 1997!

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Don't forget your entry!

THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST · 5 EXCELLENT · 4 GOOD · 3 SO-SO · 2 UGH · 1 CRAPOLA

CURSE OF THE SPAWN

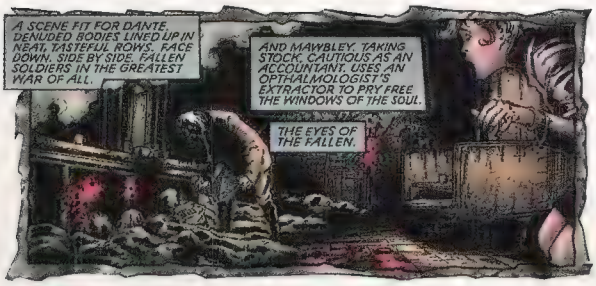
Cursed with confusion

Issues Reviewed: #5-#11
Genre: Adult action/adventure
Publisher: Image Comics/Todd McFarlane Productions
Creative Team: Alan McElroy, Dwayne Turner and Danny Miki
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: In a dark vein, *Curse of the Spawn* examines the Spawn mythos—past, present and future—in short self-contained story arcs.

The Good: Without even realizing it, you find yourself manipulated in an interesting way. The writing can change the way you perceive certain characters in the Spawn mythos. In the Angela storyline (#9-#11), the way the characters were written makes you realize that Spawn is technically a bad guy, and Angela's really the hero—instead of the usual vice-versa. You find your loyalties switching from one to the other.

There are a number of intriguing plot elements. The idea of a serial killer who only hunts serial killers is a neat concept, and the descriptions and psychoses behind all the killers was really well thought out. They weren't just murderers violently killing people, these killers had motives (insane though they were), and you got to peek inside their distorted minds.



The summary at the beginning of each issue makes it a bit easier to follow the story. And in today's high-cover-priced market, a consistent $1.95 cover price is not only affordable, it's applaudable.

The Bad: The overly melodramatic word usage, as well as the massive blocks of text per page, make *Curse* exceptionally hard to get into. You find yourself wading through tons of superfluously descriptive text, trying to decipher just what the heck's going on. In the aforementioned Angela storyline, a lot of the overdetailed text blocks eclipsed what was happening in the art, so much that the two never meshed. A better, smoother marriage between story and art would cut down on the confusion.

As for the art itself, while the style's real nice to look at, the storytelling is very inconsistent. Often you'll find yourself on a two-page spread wondering in which order to read the panels.

The stories themselves drag on a bit too long. The serial killer story (#5-#8) was interesting, but could've wrapped up an issue shorter; so could Angela's adventure. And after trudging through these wordy, lengthy stories, the endings leave you empty. You don't really come away with any real empathy for these characters or their actions.

The Buzz: This is the Year of Spawn. Major motion picture. HBO animated series. High-selling toys. Spawn is everywhere and fans can't seem to get enough of him.

The Skinny: At heart, the characters in *Curse of the Spawn* are conceptually sound. It's too bad that they're cursed by confusing, melodramatic and wordy stories with inconsistent storytelling.

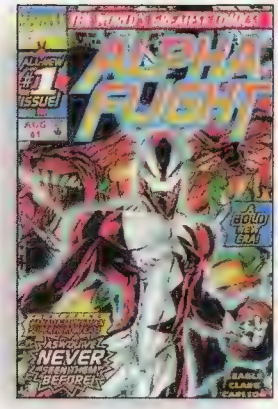
The overuse of unnecessary dialogue bogs down the stories (and issue #11's ending).

The serial killer who kills serial killers in issue #5-#8 is an interesting twist.

The Verdict: 2 UGH

ALPHA FLIGHT

Can this resurrected series take flight?



Issues Reviewed: #1-#4
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Steven T. Seagle, Scott Clark and Chris Carlson
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need To Know: Manipulated by the Canadian government's mysterious Department H, old Alpha Flight members Puck, Vindicator, Madison Jeffries and Sasquatch (minus his mind) are brought together with Radius, Flex, Murmur, Manbot and a mysteriously young (and memory-lacking) Guardian to form a new Alpha Flight team.

The Good: The level of manipulation in this book goes beyond what you'd see in most government-sponsored superhero teams. Dept. H forces Puck and Vindicator to join against their will, going so far as to erase their memories of refusal. The agency actually hires supervillains to fight Alpha Flight, just so the team can be studied. Alpha members are constantly under video surveillance so Dept. H can be aware of their every move.

The book carries through with many interpersonal relationships. Puck, a natural leader, is butting heads with Guardian, the "official" leader. Guardian's estranged wife, Vindicator, can't deal with him not remembering her or their past life together. Radius has a bullying relationship with his younger half-brother, Flex. Each interpersonal situation impacts the team's performance and it's interesting to watch.

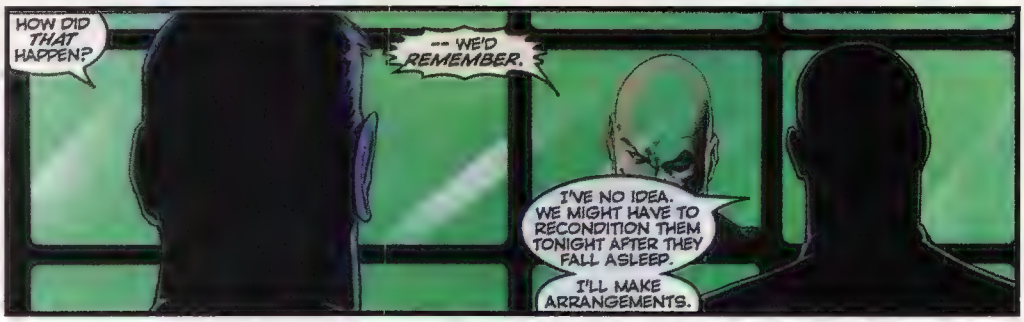
Plus, new twists are given to the new characters' seemingly unoriginal powers. Radius is wrapped in a thin force field, but can't eat or have sex without equipment. Murmur can force people to do whatever she wants, and can break mind-control by telling people to simply "remember."

Alpha's omniscient narrator actually speaks to the reader, giving the reader a unique perspective in the stories.

The Bad: The stories needs more Dept. H. It's the true "star" of the book because it has manipulated the team to the point where Alpha is merely an experimental mess of internal fighting and incompetence that is never in control of its own destiny or memories. Because of the team's refusal to gel, the book eventually gets tedious to read without more Dept. H involvement.

Overall, the villains are weak and the fight scenes are lame. In #4, Mesmero seems to have no motivation except to take over a diner, and the battle boils down to a few repetitive panels of people either being in mind-control, or freed from it back and forth. The fight with Chinook in #3 ends when Sasquatch literally rips him in two, and nobody on the team seems to mind.

Despite good panel layouts, the artwork often looks amateurish, rough and sketchy. And many of the costume redesigns are complicated and unnecessary. (Guardian's once perfectly simple costume now has distracting stripes on his head for some reason.)



The Buzz: Fans have really taken to this revival series. So much so that it gave Seagle the plum assignment of writing *Uncanny X-Men*.

The Skinny: This book thrives off Dept. H's manipulation of the team. But there's not enough it to keep our interest in this purposely dysfunctional superteam.

Dept. H's covert manipulation of the team is the most interesting part of Alpha Flight.

Because the team doesn't get along, the complete disharmony can be a turn-off.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

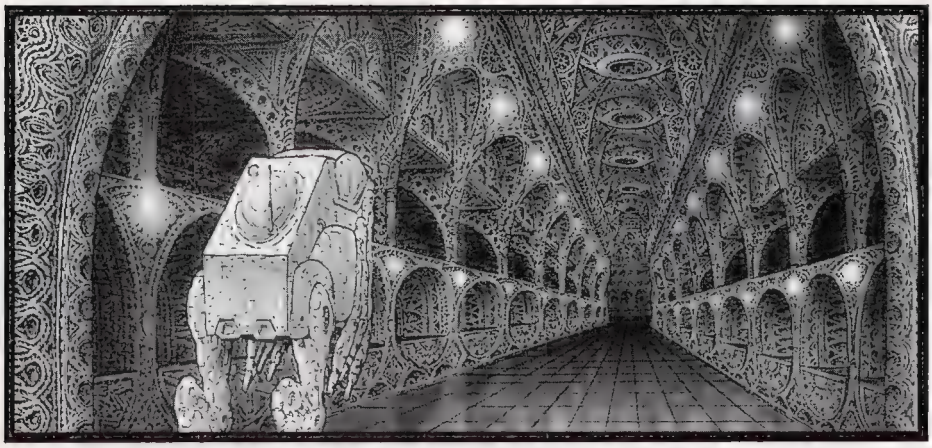
AKIKO

When 'Star Wars' meets 'The Wizard of Oz'

Issues Reviewed: #1-#16
Genre: Fantasy action/adventure
Publisher: Sirius Entertainment
Creator: Mark Crilley
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Fourth grade Earth girl Akiko travels to the wondrous planet Smoo where she encounters strange creatures, some of which help her search for Smoo's kidnapped prince.

The Good: *Akiko* is one of the most imaginative and exciting comics on the stands today. It just screams fun. From the characters' names (Mr. Beeba, Spuckler, Poog, etc.) to the covers themselves, this book's just jam-packed with creativity.



While the stories are simplistic in nature, there's a lot there. *Akiko* unabashedly borrows material from the best ("Star Wars," "The Wizard of Oz," etc.), but presents it in an entertaining way. Sure, Spuckler's the adventuresome rogue (à la Han Solo), Gax is the wacky droid (R2-D2) and Mr. Beeba's the intellect (C-3PO), but they're all fascinating characters unto themselves. Each character's personality is distinct and fleshed out. The constant bickering between Spuckler and Mr. Beeba is a hoot.

The art runs from deceptively simple to amazingly detailed. With just a few short lines, characters' expressions are perfectly portrayed, yet the backgrounds are beautifully rich and intricate. Mix in some awesome computer effects for shading tones, and *Akiko* becomes one of the most "colorful" black-and-white comics around!

The planet Smoo is a wonderful world. When Akiko and friends

hit the Moonguzzit Sea (issue #10), there's a bridge miles and miles long, with a fast-food restaurant smack in the middle! You just never know what's going to pop up next.

Almost every issue has a three- to five-page back-up story. Not tying in to the main storyline, these tales let readers see the characters in unexpected situations, like answering fan mail or hitting the movies. These li'l tales certainly help flesh out the characters and manage to give each issue a story with a satisfying closure. (That, and the hilarious contests, witty fan mail responses and behind-the-scenes sketches remind you that comics are all about fun.)

The Bad: Not much. Our sole complaint is that we want more. As the series gets older, the main storyline's page count is getting shorter. Issue #16's main tale was a whopping 15 pages! Yeah, we love those back-ups, but not at the expense of the main story. How about a 32-page issue, with a 24-page story and a short back-up? With easy reads and a number of big gorgeous splash pages, shorter page counts change *Akiko* from a quick read to a blink read. C'mon—give us more!

The Buzz: Having been nominated for the Eisner Awards, *Akiko* is certainly gaining recognition from its peers. However, this book falls just far enough outside the mainstream that not a lot of people know about it.

The Skinny: *Akiko* is truly the most successful all-ages book being published. A creative, kick-butt fairy tale adventure for all ages, it is a genuine joy to read.

The interaction between Spuckler and Beeba is a riot! (SUPERHERO FAN ALERT: Look beyond the cartoony art and lettering—you WILL like this book.)

For a "cartoony" book, the detail in Akiko is amazing.

The Verdict: 6 **THE BEST**

They were five powerful heroes in a world that needed one unbeatable team.
JLA YEAR ONE
Written by Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn.
Illustrated by Barry Kitson.
A 12-issue maxiseries exploring the beginnings of the Justice League.
Beginning in November.
Looking for the nearest comics shop?
Call 1-888-COMIC BOOK!
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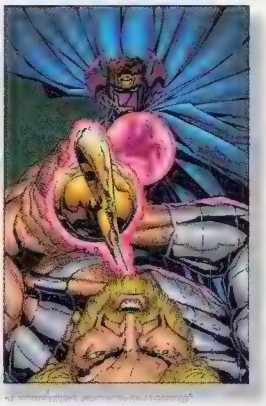
PICKS

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN NOVEMBER

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #10



AQUAMAN #40

TITLES DENOTED WITH AN **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #10

DC COMICS After a grueling mission, the Legion of Super-Heroes returns home, only to be immediately attacked by an alien who seems impervious to the team's superpowers. And as the team battles its unbeatable foe, something strange is going on inside Brainiac 5's lab. Maybe we'll get lucky and those strange goings-on will be that annoying albino monkey Koko trapped in a drill-press. By Steve Vance, John Delaney and Ron Boyd. **$1.95**

AKIKO #20

SIRIUS It's high adventure on the planet Smoo as the brainy Mr. Beeba attempts to locate a scroll to complete years of intensive research. When Beeba finds the scroll, he's forced to decide whether to retrieve his prize or save the life of his irritating assistant. For the book-loving Beeba, it's probably the toughest choice he's ever going to make. By Mark Crilley. **$2.50**

AQUAMAN #40

DC COMICS Welcome to Atlantis, recently opened to surface-dwellers as a tourist attraction. I'll be your tour guide, and if you look to your left, you'll see the evil Dr. Polaris, who snuck in with this tour, trying to take over the city. To your right, Aquaman and his security forces are attempting to stop Polaris without killing any of us tourist/hostages in the process. We sincerely hope you enjoy your stay here, and please stop by the gift shop for some overprice...er, *wonderful* Atlantis merchandise. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti. **$1.95**

ASTRO CITY #12

IMAGE The plural of Jack-in-the-Box is Jacks-in-the-Box. Remember that, because Astro City's favorite superhero Jack-in-the-Box is certainly gonna have to. When Jack meets multiple, warped copies of himself, he's gotta figure out why they exist...before they kill him. And as Jack's battlin' for his life, we readers get to learn his secret origin. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

BATMAN/PREDATOR III: BLOOD TIES #3 (OF 4)

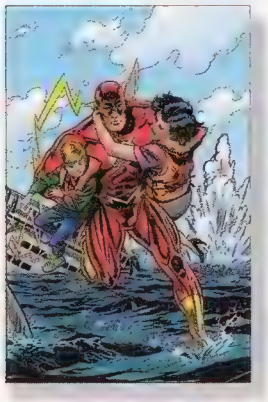
DC COMICS Wayne Tower becomes a battleground as Batman and one o' those vile alien Predators punch each other in the mouth...a lot. Meanwhile, the Boy Wonder takes a night off to go to the movies with his friends, horribly unaware that an adolescent Predator is stalking him. By Chuck Dixon, Rodolfo Damaggio and Robert Campanella. **$1.95**

BONE #30

CARTOON BOOKS Friend or foe? That's what Fone Bone and Smiley are asking about Rockjaw, the 900-pound, oversized mountain lion that's got the Bone cousins trapped in a small cave. Is he playing with them or just killing time while waiting for the oven to heat up? (Call us weird, but those Bone guys do look pretty tasty. Mmmm...Bone.) By Jeff Smith. Smith says, "Drawing Rockjaw is definitely a challenge, not only because he is a massive cat—and drawing him to scale with everything else is a little tricky—but Rockjaw is so unusual because he's not completely good or evil. So his facial expressions can be very unpredictable." **$2.95**

ASTRO CITY #12

FANTASTIC FOUR #1



THE FLASH #133

GREEN LANTERN #94

BOX OFFICE POISON #7

ANTARCTIC PRESS Late at night, Sherman the frustrated writer/bookstore clerk gets a call from his crazy girlfriend Dorothy. Seems she's drunk as a lemur and has some shocking news about her dog Gromit. You know, the answering machine was invented for just these occasions. Plus, this issue takes a look at the life of 14-year-old Jane Pekar. By Alex Robinson. "In true comics style, a prominent character dies this issue," Robinson says. "It will rival [DC's] 'Death of Superman.' We expect a lot of big publicity about this—a lot of people wearing those [black] armbands and stuff." **MR $2.95**

DAREDEVIL #371

MARVEL Hey, kids—it's dysfunctional relationship time! Daredevil, the Man Without Fear becomes Daredevil, the Man Without a Girlfriend as his old lady Karen Page dumps him like so much unrecycled trash. To add salt to the wound, she rushes into the arms of another man. Now, Daredevil's gotta get out of the funk he's been in ever since his *other* ex-girlfriend the Black Widow shot him in the chest. By Joe Kelly and Ariel Olivetti. **$1.99**

FANTASTIC FOUR #1

MARVEL One more reason to hate the French: Construction under the city of Paris reveals an ancient civilization and the Ruined, a race of no-goodniks who want to destroy modern technology. The French government calls in the Fantastic Four (who've returned from the "Heroes Reborn" Universe) to investigate, but what can even they do against a race of beings who've survived countless centuries? We suggest giving them all the "Heroes Reborn" books to read. That'll kill anything. By Scott Lobdell, Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. Lobdell says, "What is real exciting is getting back to the idea of discovery and finding new parts of the Marvel Universe that we haven't seen. I realize a lot of people will sit there and demand the return of Dr. Doom, the return of Galactus and the return of fill-in-the-blank, but that's not what the *Fantastic Four* is about. I think the *Fantastic Four* is about being surprised every issue." **$2.99**

THE FLASH #133

DC COMICS The world's fastest hero meets the world's most reflective villain when Flash struggles to overcome the Mirror Master and his fiendish traps. The Scarlet Speedster's the only thing standing in the way of the Master's total domination of Keystone City. We figure he's in for about 350 years of bad (mirror-breaking) luck. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #94

DC COMICS In the sweatiest state in the Union (Hawaii, naturally), there's strange things afoot. Kyle Rayner (Green Lantern) finds himself under the control of a Hawaiian goddess and wondering just what the hell "afoot" means. The goddess wants to sacrifice young men to her god, and she's targeted Superboy as her next victim. This story concludes over in *Superboy* #47. By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Terry Austin. **$1.95**

HITMAN #22

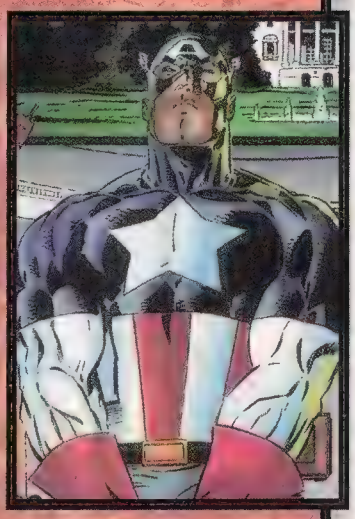
DC COMICS

This issue's told in rhyme
and with very good reason.
Hitman and Natt try whackin' a demented Santa
for the holiday season.
The pair is *sans* money
and Santa is glowing.
His name is Bob Snurd
and radioactivity!—My God!—he's throwing.
Now shoppers are dying
and so is our verse.
A quick exit we'll make
afore things get worse.
This issue is done
with great skill and timing
by Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Steve Pugh
for which there's no rhyming.
$2.25

READ THIS BOOK!

CAPTAIN AMERICA #1

MARVEL Repeat to yourself... "It was just a dream, it was just a dream." America's greatest hero Captain America is back in the Marvel Universe and all is right with the world. After the sordid events of "Heroes Reborn," Cap lands in Japan, smack in the middle of a terrorist attack led by the villainous Lady Deathstrike. There, Cap finds that defeating the bad guys might be harder than just punching and kicking 'em into submission. By the much-beloved team of Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Bob Wiacek. Welcome back, guys. "We've always made a big deal about the fact that Captain America will always find a way to save the day, will always find a way to make something right," Waid says. "But we put him in a situation where there is no way and he has to make a really hard choice. We put his ability to always find a way completely to the test—and I'm not sure he's going to pass." **$2.99**



JLA #14

DC COMICS "Rock of Ages," Part 5 (of 6). It's a dark hour for the JLA as they're forced to live under Darkseid's rule. The evil conqueror's turned the moon into a Parademon factory and enslaved most of Earth's population, and nothing the still-free Green Lantern, Aquaman and the Flash do is gonna change things. As the destruction reaches a fevered crescendo, a mysterious hero flies in from outer space. Ooooo...who could it be? By Grant Morrison, Gary Frank and John Dell. Also check out *JLA: Paradise Lost* #1 (of 3), as the JLA and the angel Zauriel scrap with the twisted Lord Azmodel. By Mark Millar and Ariel Olivetti. **$1.95 EACH**

JLA: YEAR ONE #1 (OF 12)

DC COMICS They were the original Fab Five—Flash (Barry Allen), Black Canary, Green Lantern (Hal Jordan), Martian Manhunter and Aquaman. As the JLA, these five heroes became legends, won the love of Earthlings everywhere and beat up such goons as Vandal Savage, T.O. Morrow and the Brotherhood of Evil. Now learn the truth. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Barry Kitson. **$2.95**

KA-ZAR #9

MARVEL "Urban Jungle," Part 2 (of 4). The stinkpot Parnival Plunder takes sibling rivalry to new heights when he teams up with cosmic trash-bag Thanos to lay waste his brother Ka-Zar. Waitaminnit! Thanos vs. Ka-Zar? Unless they're planning on changing the name of this book to *Thanos the Savage*, that just seems kinda ridiculous. By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.99**

READ THIS BOOK!

THUNDERBOLTS #10

MARVEL Well, the secret's out. Someone in the Marvel Universe knows the Thunderbolts are really the Masters of Evil with new names and costumes. And that someone's using that information to take over the team. The blackmailer's revealed in this issue, and the Thunderbolts will have to deal with him (or her...), as well as the return of Marvel's greatest heroes. Oh, yeah, and the Fantastic Four show up to reclaim their headquarters. Yep, it's a great month to be a Thunderbolt. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. Busiek says, "This is the issue where we deal with 'Heroes Return,' so the Fantastic Four and Avengers are back in the Marvel Universe, and that plays a part in the Thunderbolts' schemes and plans. If [the Thunderbolts] have been positioning themselves as the replacements for these guys, what will their role be now that these guys are back?" **$1.99**

JLA #14

MAJOR BUMMER #6

MAJOR BUMMER #6

DC COMICS Meet Milton Tweeleg, more properly spelled L-O-S-E-R. Tweeleg's an average schlub who becomes fascinated with the super-powered Lou Martin and wants nothing more than to turn him into a bonafide celebrity. To accomplish this, Tweeleg has whipped up a plot he feels will show the world the kind of hero our slacker Martin is, and get him some well-deserved recognition. By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. **$2.50**

NIGHTWING #16

DC COMICS Even under threat of extended torture or embarrassment, we couldn't make this up: Nightwing sets up a secret headquarters in a dilapidated auto shop in Blüdhaven and builds a fancy shmancy car—the Nightwingmobile. The Nightwingmobile may be the silliest thing since the Spider-Mobile, but hey, like they say, it's the car. Chicks dig the car. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. Dixon says, "Nightwing finally gets his own car, and we just about tell where he keeps it and the very special nature of this car. It's not like the Batmobile at all. It's very Nightwing. It's very Blüdhaven. It's the ultimate urban assault vehicle. Oh, yeah, and he also chases a bunch of bad guys around [with] the car too." **$1.95**

POISON ELVES #29

SIRIUS As our elfish hero Lusipher chases his ex-friend Jace through the city of Mandratha, a trap is laid for him by that rat-bastard Vido. And even if Luse manages to escape, he'll still have to watch out, because his former bosses Morachi and Talon are sending their own assassins after him. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

PREACHER #33

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Things aren't going too well for the unholy trinity of Jesse Custer (Preacher), his girlfriend Tulip and his blood-sucking pal Cassidy. Custer's in a trance, Cassidy's in a bind and Tulip has to hold off a major assault by Les Enfants Du Sang. Oh, yeah, and the boy with a butt for a face takes some serious steps toward becoming a rockin' superstar. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #10

ACCLAIM November is "Goat Month" at Acclaim. We shudder to even think what this means, so we'll just say that Quantum and Woody suffer adversely from the villain Calamity's chaos field. When the dust settles, or smoke clears, or fat lady sings, or whatever, Quantum ends up in Woody's body and Woody's in Quantum's body, and everything's

mixed up! Plus, the goat gets a name and goes AWOL. Just like our sanity. By Christopher Priest, MD Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

ROBIN #49

DC COMICS Robin travels to France, the land of cartoon skunk Pepe Le Pew and rabid politician Charles de Gaulle, to complete his training in the martial arts. While he's learning to break boards and crush bones, the Boy Wonder's gonna run into a pretty young woman who wants to squeeze into his life, and a villain who wants to run over his life with a steamroller. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Bob Smith. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #58

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The Cannon," Part 2 (of 4). Inside the creepy confines of a dead man's mansion, the Golden Age Sandman crosses paths with the mysterious Cannon, who might be responsible for a series of murders. While Sandy's traipsing through mansions, his girlfriend Dian uncovers some evidence about Nazi gold that's being smuggled into the United States. By Steven T. Seagle, Matt Wagner, Michael Lark and Richard Case. **MR $2.50**

SAVAGE DRAGON #43

IMAGE Being marooned on an alien planet is bad, but not half as bad as being stuck on an alien planet that's about to be destroyed. The Savage Dragon and the New Government Strike Force find themselves trapped on a doomed world, and not one of them has any idea how to get off the planet before it goes kablooey. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

STARDUST #2 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS They say if you catch a falling star and put it in your pocket, your pants will catch on fire. Anyway, Tristran Thorn (a human/faerie hybrid) quests to locate the site where a star has fallen, but he's going to have to hurry—a bunch of witches and warlocks are searching for the star too. By Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess. **MR $5.95**

TERMINAL CITY: AERIAL GRAFFITI #3 (OF 5)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Daredevil Cosmo Quinn is one of the featured performers at the grand opening of the mouth of the Trans-Atlantic Tunnel. It should be a real fun event, overshadowed only by the wacky things going on in Terminal City—the arrival of the "Cowgirls in Outer Space" striptease show, and the impending Undersea Ball, to name just two. By Dean Motter and Michael Lark. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #10

UNCLE SAM #1

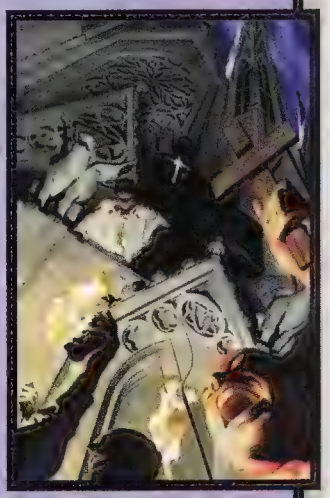
UNCLE SAM #1 (OF 2)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS He might be the living embodiment of America. Or a bum who dresses like Uncle Sam. After an old amnesiac man is kicked out of a hospital, he experiences the worst moments in American history. Through it all, a strange woman haunts his dreams, and a city by the unsalted sea beckons to the vagabond named Sam. By Steve Darnall and Alex Ross. Ross says, "[Sam's] very much a figure that

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Astro City: Confession (Image) ▶



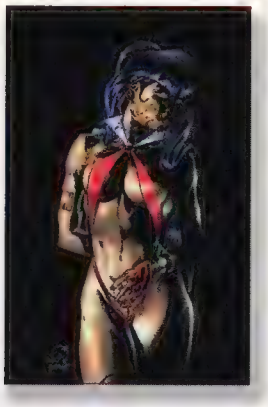
Dreaming of becoming a big-shot superhero, young Brian Kinney packs his bags and journeys to Astro City. There, he encounters aliens, vampires, serial killers and a host of oddball characters. As Altar Boy, Kinney becomes a bonafide sidekick to the Confessor, a hero who's definitely not all he seems. Confession contains reprints of Astro City #4-#9, as well as Astro City #1/2. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. $19.95—softcover; $49.95— hardcover

JLA: American Dreams (DC Comics)
Dream a little dream, as the Justice League attempts to recruit new members, fights a war against the angel Azmodel and is sent into hallucinogenic comas by the wily villain Key in this trade paperback reprinting the insanely popular *JLA #5-#9*. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter, Oscar Jimenez, John Dell, Chip Wallace and Ken Branch. **$7.95**

Quantum and Woody: The Director's Cut (Acclaim)
Quantum and Woody may be the world's most inept superhero team, but their adventures sure make for some fun reading. *The Director's Cut* compiles the first four issues of *Quantum and Woody* in one easy-to-open trade paperback. Besides showcasing the first appearances of Quantum, Woody and their as-yet-unnamed goat pal, this puppy also features new scenes that weren't included in the original comics. By Christopher Priest, MD Bright and Greg Adams. **$7.95**

Son of Origins of Marvel Comics (Marvel)
Ever wonder how the X-Men or Avengers got together? Well, worry no more, as Marvel reprints the origin tales of the X-Men, Iron Man, Silver Surfer, Avengers and Daredevil along with commentary by Marvel Comics guru Stan Lee in this 272-page book. Plus, each story is complemented by a modern tale starring the hero or group. By Stan Lee and a whole bunch o' other fine fellers. **$24.99**

UNLIMITED ACCESS #2



VAMPIRELLA: ASCENDING EVIL #1

feels the entire pain of the nation. What we're trying to relate is that America needs a certain amount of introspection. We really need to take a hard look at a lot of the things we've done and where we've been as a nation, as opposed to always trying to imagine ourselves in a much better light. As soon as we have self-realization, we can go forward, and that's what [Sam] needs to go through in the story." **MR $4.95**

UNLIMITED ACCESS #2 (OF 4)

MARVEL It's a most uncivil war as Marvel and DC's heroes battle, with the only hope for peace being the time-traveling hero Access. Access is sort of busy, though, seeing as how he's uncontrollably jumping through the ages. So now you've got the Legion of Super-Heroes throwing down with the X-Men, and Batman and Daredevil pounding each other. Hey, somebody fire this Access kid. He's doin' a terrible job of keeping order. By Karl Kesel, Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson. **$1.99**

VAMPIRELLA: ASCENDING EVIL #1 (OF 3)

HARRIS Back from the dead, Vampi's on a mission to kill all vampires, and she's picked an evil vampire cult as her first target. The cult's slowly but surely taking over organized crime, and it's Hell-bent on putting the kibosh on Vampirella. We'd settle for just seeing her do some jumping jacks. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.95**

VERTIGO: WINTER'S EDGE

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Neil Gaiman's writing about the Endless again. More on that in a second. Here's the deal: Vertigo's creepiest cats come out for this 96-page one-shot comic with more chills than a night at the Ice Capades. Narrated by *House of Secrets'* Rain Harper, the book tells tales of The Endless' Destiny (by Neil Gaiman), The Golden Age Sandman, *Hellblazer*'s John Constantine, *The Dreaming*'s Cain and Abel, and lots more. By Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison, Steven T. Seagle, Peter Milligan, Matt Wagner, Teddy Kristiansen, Paul Pope and a whole bunch of other good folk. **MR $7.95**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #8

DC COMICS Bad dreams are the order of the day when Batman's nemesis the Scarecrow rattles his chains at the Young Heroes. The Heroes outnumber the Scarecrow seven to one, but something tells us to put a buck on the guy with stuffing in his pants. Various secrets will also be revealed, as hearts are broken and kisses exchanged. By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. **$1.95**

Also shipping in NOVEMBER

Ash #1 (Event)
Who put Ash's mom in a coma? Join the search as Ash hunts down the mystery bomber responsible. **$2.95**

Batman Books (DC Comics)
The Clayfaces evolve to an all-new level, as Batman and the paranormal detective Chase (who's soon to star in her own book) try bringing 'em down in *Batman* #550. The Batmobile becomes a deathtrap in *Detective Comics* #717, when the evil cyborg Gearhead turns it against Batman. *Batman* #550: **$3.50**—special edition, **$2.95**—regular edition; *Detective* #717—**$1.95**

Cable #50 (Marvel)
What do Apocalypse, Sebastian Shaw, Donald Pierce and an enemy from Victorian England (1859, to be exact) have in common? They all want Cable's head. **$2.99**

The Darkness #10 (Image)
It's two, two, two treats in one as the Darkness and Witchblade cross. Witchblade gauntlet wants one thing: the death of the Darkness and its host Jackie Estacado. **$2.50**

Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday #3 (Image)
Max must save his girlfriend, while avoiding government agent Christie Blaze. **$2.50**

Generation X #34 (Marvel)
Double your pleasure this month! While the villain Emplate comes lookin' for his twin sisters (who form the mutant M), Gen Xer Skin reveals why he faked his own death. **$1.99**

Painkiller Jane #6 (Event)
Who's leaving blood-drained corpses on the streets of New York's East Village? That's what Painkiller Jane and the cops wanna know. **$2.95**

Spawn #68 (Image)
Spawn unfolds the alley's startling secrets, and the Freak shows up. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
It's team-ups galore in the Spidey-verse this month. Doctor Strange and Spidey must escape the nether realms, while fighting the power-craving Technomancers in *Sensational Spider-Man* #23. While the Silver Surfer visits Spidey, Carnage breaks out of the Ravencroft mental facility (again) in *Amazing Spider-Man* #430. It's good, sticky fun when the glue-wielding Trapster joins forces with the Shocker to give Spidey an Excedrin headache in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #87. *Spectacular Spider-Man* #253 sees lame-ass heroes Grizzly and Gibbon get captured by the equally lame White Rabbit. And wrapping up Team-Up Month is none other than *Marvel Team-Up* #5, where the secrets of the enigmatic Authority are unraveled by Spidey and…ah, that would be telling! **$1.99 each**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
Happy Birthday! The Empire's Grand Admiral Thrawn creates a slew of clones, while Princess Leia gives birth to Han Solo's babies in *Star Wars: The Last Command* #1. Darth Vader's lackey Jix attempts to kill an Imperial traitor in *Star Wars: Shadow Stalker*, as the Empire's greatest pilot Baron Fel makes a last-ditch effort to kill the Rogue Squadron in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—In the Empire's Service* #4. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
Woo-hoo! Mr. Mxyzptlk dies in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #75. (Let's just hope the annoying li'l imp stays dead!) *Superman* #131 sees Lex Luthor and Contessa have a baby (well, Contessa really does most of the work…), and in *Adventures of Superman* #554, Superman finds out who's responsible for all the strange disappearances in Metropolis. And finally, the Legion of Super-Heroes asks Supes for help in battling (snicker) C.O.M.P.U.T.O. in *Action Comics* #741. **$1.95 each**

Uncanny X-Men #351 (Marvel)
Dr. Cecilia Reyes returns to her job and attempts to put her life back in order. **$1.99**

Witchblade #19 (Image)
The end of the Witchblade/Darkness crossover may mean the end of New York City, as all-out war ensues! **$2.50**

Wolverine #120 (Marvel)
Without his adamantium, Wolverine's in it deep as the world's deadliest assassin, the White Ghost, returns to get his revenge on our hairy hero! **$1.99**

X-Men #71 (Marvel)
While Cyclops considers leaving the X-Men, the rest o' the gang rebuilds the mansion and—dear God in Heaven!—Marrow visits…Salem Center. **$1.99**

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TRAILER PARK

***Wizard*'s column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that**

WILL BATMAN TAKE THE FIFTH?

By Rob Allstetter

After the commercial and critical disappointment of **"Batman & Robin"** last summer, the film franchise's future remains in question. However, it appears a fifth Batman movie will eventually be made by Warner Bros.

A script for the next installment has been assigned to Mark Protosevich. The story reportedly will involve Scarecrow and Harley Quinn and be darker in nature than "Batman & Robin." Joel Schumacher, who directed "Batman Forever" and "Batman & Robin," remains linked to the next entry in the series, although there could be a new director.

And what does **George Clooney**, the third actor to play Batman in the series that started in 1989, think of a possible fifth Batflick?

"I don't know if we'll do another one," Clooney told "E! News Daily." "If there is another, I'd do it. I have a contract to do it. It'd be interesting to get another crack at it to make it different or better.

"I got the sense ['Batman & Robin'] fell short, so I need to go back and look at it to see what I could have done better."

It's likely that another Batman movie wouldn't be in theaters until at least the year 2000.

In other Bat-news, **Jeep Swenson** and **Burgess Meredith**, actors who portrayed Batman foes, died recently. Swenson, who played Bane in this summer's "Batman & Robin," died Aug. 18 at the age of 40. Meredith, who played the Penguin in the 1960s "Batman" television series, died Sept. 9 at the age of 89.

The official cause of Swenson's death was heart failure, but his widow, Erin, revealed on "Entertainment Tonight" that Swenson had used steroids for 15 years. A blood clot moved from Swenson's leg to his lung and prevented oxygen from reaching his organs.

Swenson, 6 feet tall and 400 pounds, was an internationally known bodybuilder and professional wrestler who used the pseudonym "Jeep the Mercenary." His film credits included "No Holds Barred," "The Big Brawl" and "Bulletproof." He told *Wizard* last spring that he anticipated "Batman & Robin" would be his big break into Hollywood.

James Caan, Swenson's co-star in "Bulletproof," gave his eulogy at the funeral.

Meredith, who was twice nominated for Academy Awards and won an Emmy, was known to a generation as the quacking, umbrella-carrying Penguin. He was also widely remembered as the cantankerous trainer in "Rocky." Meredith's film career dated back to 1937 and included more than 75 movies.

Meredith was suffering from melanoma and Alzheimer's disease at the time of his death.

™ & © 1997 DC Comics. Photo: Christine Loss.

After a disappointing "Batman & Robin," the Bat-franchise's future remains in question.

MEN IN BLACK BLAST BOX OFFICE

Will Smith and **Tommy Lee Jones** weren't the only **"Men in Black"** this summer. Sony Pictures executives were sporting the same color, thanks in part to the $238 million in box office income pulled in by the comics-inspired film of that name.

That made "Men in Black" a narrow victor over "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," which had earned $237 million as of Labor Day, as the summer's top-grossing movie. The performance helped Sony, which also scored hits with the Harrison Ford-starring "Air Force One" and the "Batman & Robin"-beating "My Best Friend's Wedding," to a staggering total of $572 million for the summer.

"Men in Black" will debut on home video on Nov. 25. A big promotional push

will accompany its release on VHS, VHS widescreen and laserdisc, including a rebate promotion with Ray-Ban sunglasses.

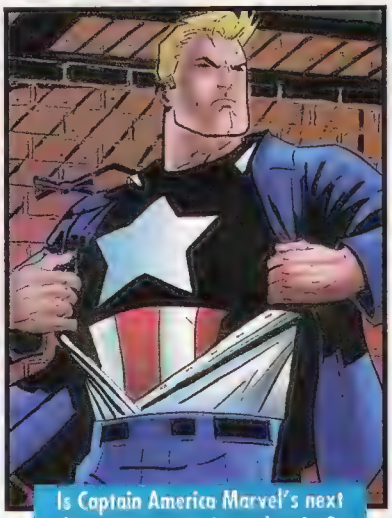
The Sci-Fi Channel will air a special, "Men in Black: Behind the Shades," to coincide with the video premiere. There will also be a second music video from the film's soundtrack, featuring Smith's song "Just Cruisin'," that will boast footage from the movie.

The first music video from the film, for the movie's eponymous theme song, helped vault the soundtrack to the top of the charts. Smith won an MTV Video Music Award for Best Video from a Film for the work, which will be included on the home video and laserdisc releases.

Meanwhile, Ed Solomon, writer of "Men in Black," is working on a script for the **"X-Men"** film in development for 20th Century Fox. And the animated "Men in Black" series began Oct. 11 on the Kids' WB! network.

HULK: A SMASHING START FOR '98

The **"Hulk"** feature film, written and to be directed by Jonathan Hensleigh for Universal Pictures, has been pushed back to a planned January production start. Sources said this is simply a matter of not rushing the movie, which figures to be complicated by a computer-generated Hulk and lots of action.



Is Captain America Marvel's next hero to get an animated series?

Casting had not been completed at press time. "Hulk" will now likely be in theaters in the first half of 1999 instead of the July 1998 release originally targeted.

Meanwhile, the second season of the "Incredible Hulk" animated series began on UPN on Sept. 22. The eight new episodes will feature three original, made-for-television villains: Allure, Scimitar and Hybrid.

Allure, the new crime boss in Chicago, has the gamma-induced ability to make men fall deeply in love with her; she will debut in an episode called "They Call Me Mr. Fixit." The mobster story will prominently feature the gray Hulk.

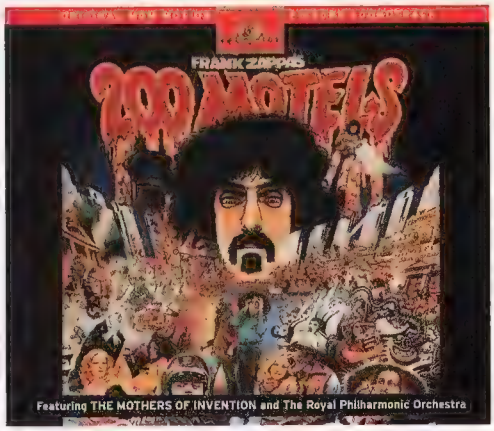
Scimitar is featured in "The Lost Village," an episode in which Bruce Banner, Betty Ross and She-Hulk try to locate the mythical utopian village of Anavrin in hopes of finding a cure for Banner's transformations.

"Mission: Incredible" introduces Hybrid when Banner learns that S.H.I.E.L.D. is using one of his unstable gamma energy cores to power an underwater facility. He, Betty and She-Hulk don the latest espionage gear to try to break in and secretly shut down the core.

It has yet to be determined if UPN will order any episodes beyond the 21 that have been produced.

In other Marvel news, the three-part "Secret Wars" story arc on Fox's **"Spider-Man"** animated series will include episodes titled "Arrival," "The Gauntlet of the Red Skull" and "Doom."...The **Avengers** and **Captain America** remain top candidates for the next Saban-produced animated series for Fox....The final mix on the **"Nick Fury"** telefilm was being completed as *Wizard* went to press. The movie, which stars David Hasselhoff in the title role, is still expected to air on Fox either in January or February....The **"X-Men"** reruns airing in syndication have new animation for the closing credits.

THE MOTHER OF ALL SOUNDTRACKS



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McElroy (below) leaves Witchblade (right).

Photo courtesy of Alan McElroy/TMP

McELROY SWITCHES OFF WITCHBLADE

Alan McElroy, the writer of the "Spawn" live-action movie, "Spawn" animated series and *Curse of the Spawn* comic, is no longer involved with Top Cow Productions' live-action **"Witchblade"** television series, which is being developed for syndication. McElroy said he had "a parting of the ways" with Top Cow.

"From what I understand, it came down to time of involvement and other projects Alan was committed to that could impede the show's production," said Top Cow's Brad Foxhoven. "We still love what Alan did for the show and we have every intention of somehow involving him in the show sometime in the future."

McElroy's primary project these days is a script for a live-action movie based on *Resident Evil*, the Capcom video game. McElroy said he was happy with the response to the "Spawn" live-action film, particularly the $21.5 million opening weekend.

"A sequel is definitely a possibility after an opening weekend like that," he said. "It speaks to an audience that is hungry for that kind of material."

FUTURE HORRORS FOR THE CROW

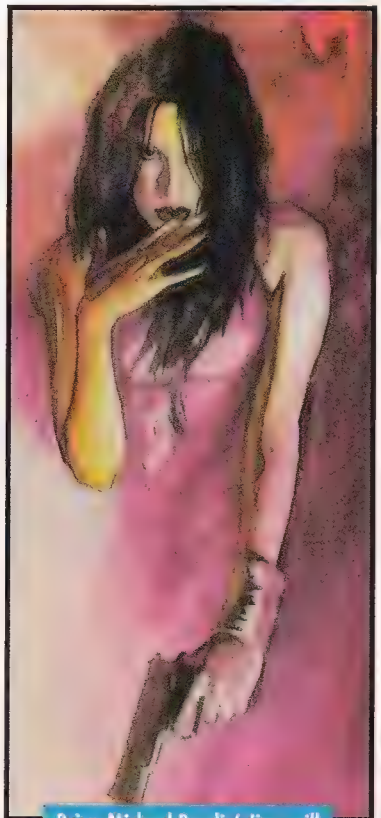
The third **Crow** movie, written and to be directed by Rob Zombie, will be called "The Crow: 2037." Sources said the film will have more of a chainsaw approach, bringing it into the again-successful horror genre.

Zombie's involvement with the series began with the last film, "The Crow: City of Angels," which starred Vincent Perez. Zombie's band, White Zombie, covered the KC and the Sunshine Band song "I'm Your Boogie Man" for that film's soundtrack. Zombie will score "The Crow: 2037" with Charlie Clouser of Nine Inch Nails.

There has been no casting yet for the movie, which will feature entirely different characters than the first two films.

BENDIS BONDS WITH MIRAMAX

Brian Michael Bendis, whose ***Jinx*** series is currently being published by Image Comics, has signed a two-picture, first-look deal with Miramax/Dimension Films. He will write and executive-produce movies based on the Caliber comics *A.K.A. Goldfish* and *Jinx*. The films will be produced through Avenue Pictures, which has been behind such efforts as "Drugstore Cowboy" and "The Player."



Brian Michael Bendis' Jinx will shoot up the big screen soon.

Bendis has just started working on scripts, and directors have yet to be attached to the projects. He said the stories will be based on the comics—for the most part.

"You will get some differences, especially in 'Goldfish,'" Bendis said. "There are things that work in comics that don't work in cinema and things that work in cinema that don't work in comics. I have put great thought into what the differences will be."

Miramax's Bob Weinstein said Bendis' characters have the potential to become franchises, like Miramax has had with "The Crow." "Brian is a bright new voice for the film world," Weinstein said.

SHORT TAKES

Syndicated series **"Hercules: The Legendary Journeys"** and **"Xena: Warrior Princess"** have been renewed through the 1999-2000 television season....**"Tom Clancy's Net Force"** will be a four-hour mini-series on ABC. "Net Force," a partnership between BIG Entertainment (whose primary focus moved from comics to illustrated novels early this year) and the C.P. Group, centers upon an elite, military-style division of the FBI in the near future....**Ben Edlund**, creator of "The Tick," is writing an animated adventure movie for Fox Family Films called "Planet Ice."...**"CatDog"** is a new animated series set to begin on Nickelodeon in the fall of 1998. Forty episodes have been ordered....**Heather McComb**, who played Jubilee in the "Generation X" telefilm, and Traci Lords, who plays a vampire in the upcoming "Blade" film, will be series regulars on NBC's "Profiler." ...**David Goyer**, whose script credits include "The Crow: City of Angels," "Blade" and "Nick Fury," is co-creator and executive producer of the NBC series "Sleepwalkers," which premieres on Nov. 1....**Jerry Goldsmith** ("Air Force One," "Total Recall") will be providing the score to the "Lost in Space" film, due April 3 from New Line Cinema. **W**

Xena and Hercules will stick around till the year 2000.

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Detroit-based writer Rob Allstetter has just gone from a Clooney haircut to Ray-Ban specs...one day he'll look cool.

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Marvel Comics and Comic Images Present...

The Incredible Hulk "Drop the Gamma Bomb" Contest

Years ago, a gamma bomb explosion transformed Dr. Bruce Banner into the walking monstrosity known as the Incredible Hulk! But just imagine...what if it was Mr. Fantastic who was there when the gamma bomb blew up? Or Spider-Man? Or Brother Voodoo?! What would each of them look like? What new powers would they have? Just how messed-up would these guys be???

How To Enter

1) Pick your favorite Marvel character.
2) Imagine what he (or she) would look like if he'd been at the gamma bomb explosion instead of ol' Brucie.
3) Draw him. Use an 8" X 10" piece of paper and any old drawing instruments you care to use.
4) Be creative! Use that noggin of yours! The most creative entries will win these prizes:

Grand Prize (1): One winner will receive an original sketch by *Incredible Hulk* artist Adam Kubert, where he'll draw his interpretation of *your* gamma bomb entry! Plus, the winner will get a Hulk vs. Thing T-shirt, a Hulk retailer stand-up, a Hulk Pez dispenser and an autographed copy of *Hulk: Future Imperfect* #1 signed by Peter David and George Pérez! Bombs away!

Second Prize (10): Ten other people will receive a Hulk retailer stand-up, a Hulk Pez dispenser and an autographed copy of *Hulk: Future Imperfect* #1 signed by Peter David and George Pérez! That's da bomb!

Some winning entries will appear in a future installment of *Wizard*'s "Drawing Board" section!

This month's contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics and Comic Images, gamma-irradiated freaks of nature.

Hulk Smash Lawyers!

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics, Comic Images, their immediate families and people who call She-Hulk "Shulkie" for short. Say that out loud: "Shulkie." Sounds stupid, eh? So stop saying it. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Hulk Gamma Bomb Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. While the Hulk is a good guy, Hulk Hogan has become a bad guy. Hulk Hogan likes pie. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by December 31, 1997.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about January 15, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after January 15, 1998, send a self-

MARVEL COMICS

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it off to: Hulk Gamma Bomb Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is December 31, 1997.

Hulk Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 31, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

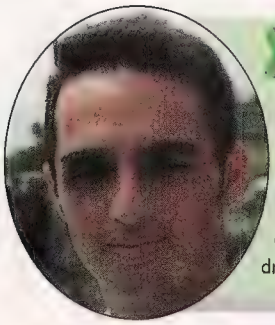
Did you attach your entry?

Basic Training

this month's host: Phil Jimenez

How to Draw Energy Effects

Photo courtesy of Phil Jimenez



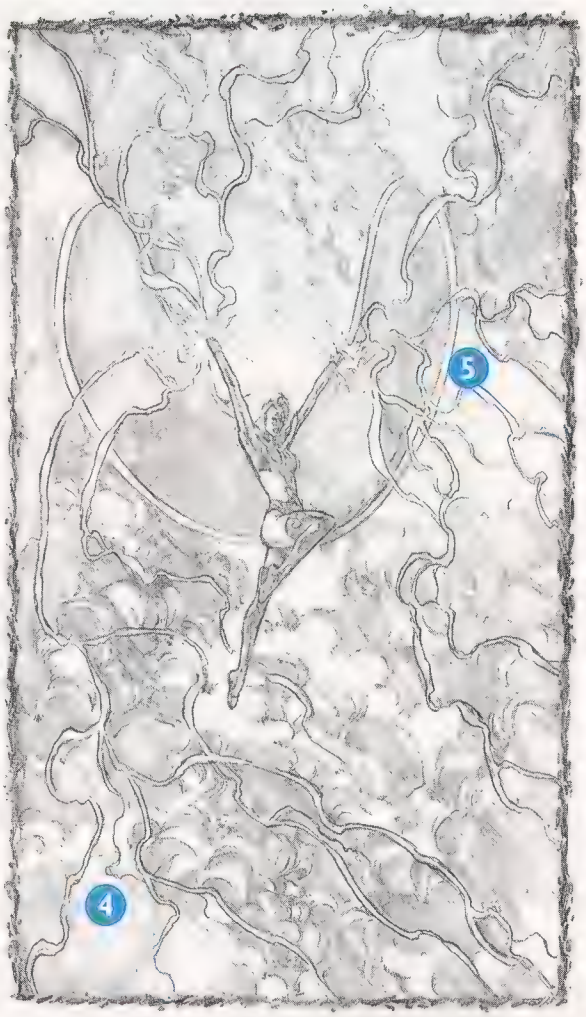
Y'know, during the six or so years I've been in comics, I've worked on a variety of characters with powers ranging from optic blasts to the elemental manipulation of the ocean. In that time, I've had to learn how to draw quite a few different types of "energy effects"—from fire to lightning to smoke and beyond—and their effects on the heroes and villains using them. Well, I'm here to suggest a few ways that you can draw these energies.

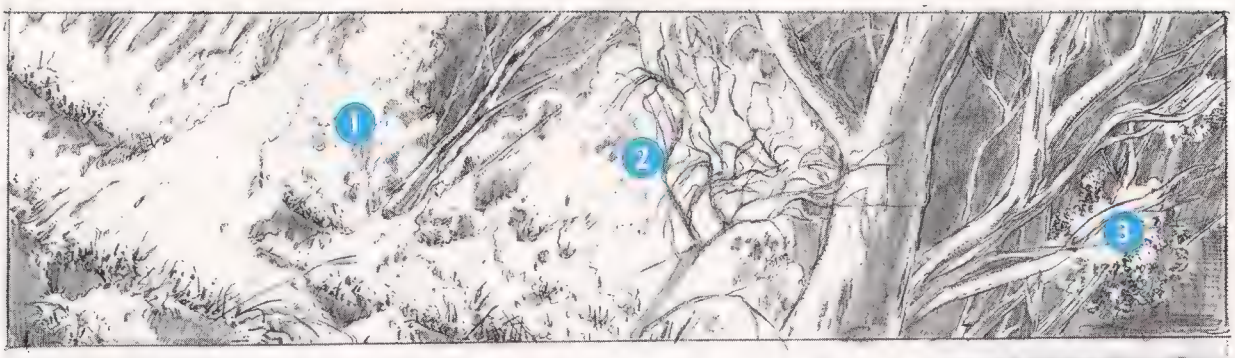
I can't stress enough, however, how important photo reference was and is to my learning about how these energy patterns really work, and what they look like. I hope you'll whip out those ol' science books and magazines, and check out the photos. Nothing like knowing the reality before drawing the fantasy, I say! Shall we?

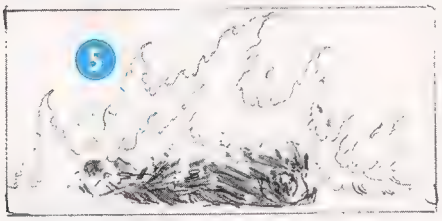
White Lightning

Say you're drawing Storm or Thor raining lightning down on some loser supervillain. Keep in mind, lightning never travels in a straight line; it often ripples and splits into smaller (and sometimes larger) bolts along the way. A good way to start is by drawing a single, curvy line to begin the shape of the actual lightning bolt (fig. 1). Once that's done, go in and add single lines for the tendrils attached (fig. 2). Space them out any way you wish—cluster them, or add new ones at an even distance from each other. When the first lightning line is finished, add some "weight" to it by drawing another line parallel to the first (fig. 3), but vary it enough so that parts of the tendril appear thicker in some spots than others. Just keep it moving, with a real "rhythm."

You should also keep in mind that lightning is a light source, and its effects (like shadows and harsh lighting) should be reflected on the person casting it. The white light of the lightning is best seen splashed across a darker background: I suggest dark storm clouds, which only add to the mood (fig. 4). Finally, creating a lightning storm—not just a simple bolt—helps add to the intensity of the effect, and makes the character look more powerful (fig. 5).





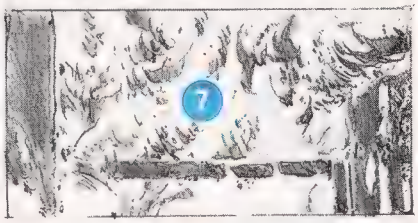


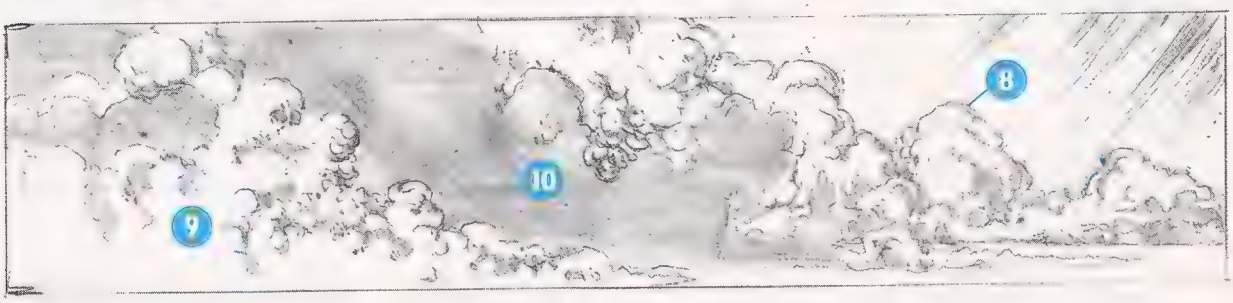
Fire in the Hole

There are a couple of ways to approach fire in comics: There's the "cartoon" version, where the fire is defined by a rippling line, or the more "reality-based" version, where the fire is defined by its destruction. I'm a sucker for a combination of both (fig. 1). Fire is a constantly changing object, and your drawing should reflect that. It's also a light source, so think harsh lighting (fig. 2) and heavy shadows (fig. 3).

If you're going to draw "cartoony" fire—like the Human Torch's—use a series of curvy "waves," one in rapid succession of the other, making a jagged pattern (fig. 4). These little waves should vary in size, and their curls work best when pointing in one direction (fig. 5).

The more "reality-based" fire is created by drawing the dark areas and patterns of motion an inferno causes: small patches of black, contrasted with white, open areas (fig. 6). Where the flame is most intense, these smaller "licks" or "swirls" of black help indicate movement (fig. 7). Charred remains are a great indicator of the flame, as well as thick black smoke that rises from the burning wreckage.



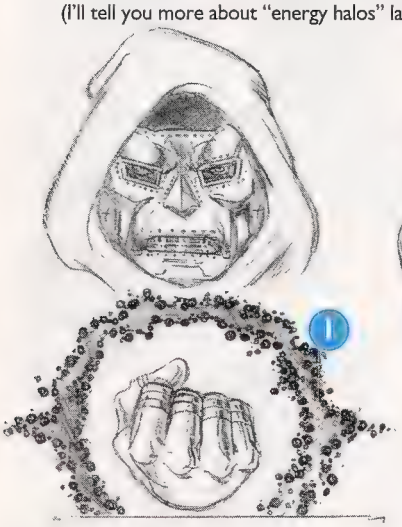


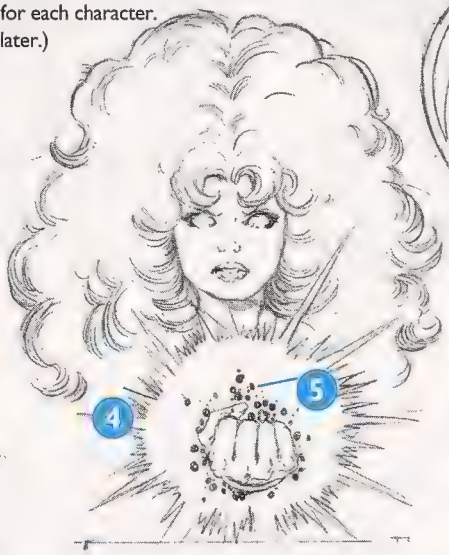
Smoking Section

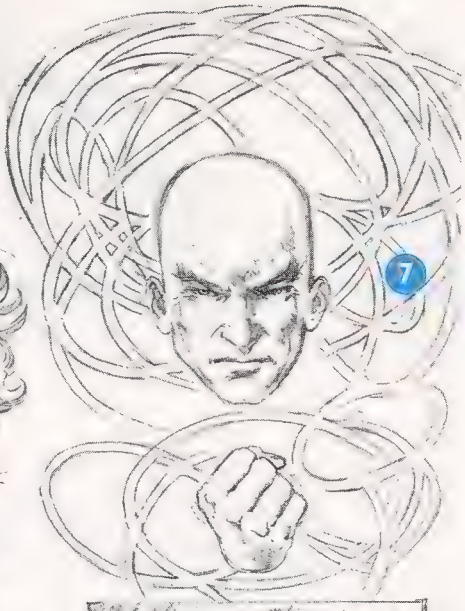
Another constantly shifting element, smoke can often be exchanged for storm clouds in comics. Just imagine the lumpy consistency of mashed potatoes when you're drawing smoke, and you're on the right track (fig. 8). An easy way to start is by drawing a series of interconnecting circles, all varying greatly in size. After erasing most of the lines where the circles intersect, but still keeping their overall shape, you can go in and add the darker shadows on the circle edges to help define the cloud's shape (fig. 9). Also, smoke is often filled with large areas of solid black (fig. 10).

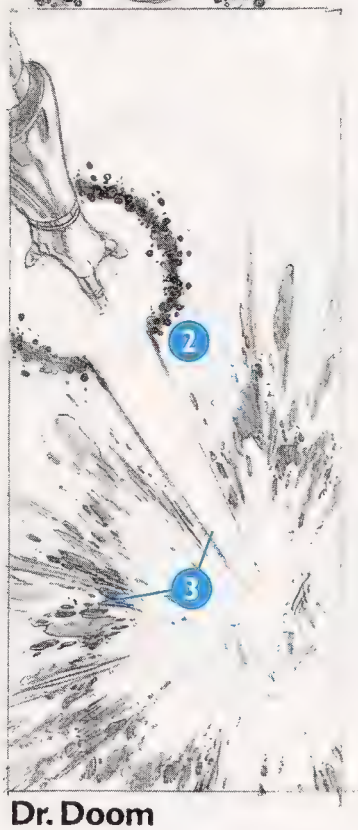
Energetic Powers

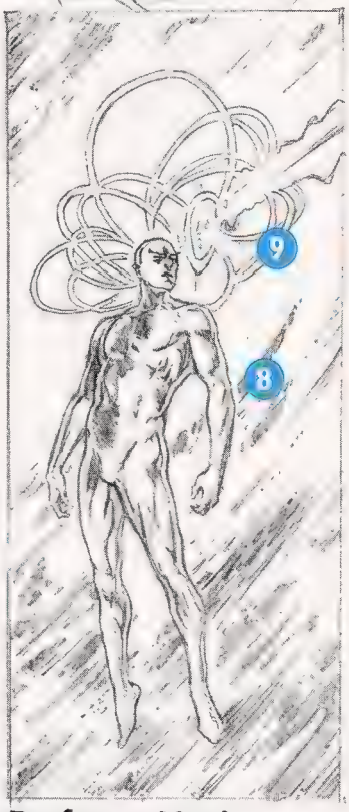
Doctor Doom, Starfire and Professor Xavier are three characters able to project energy from their bodies or minds. Each of these energy signatures and the "halos" surrounding their hands is different and appropriate for each character.
(I'll tell you more about "energy halos" later.)











Dr. Doom

Doctor Doom's hand is surrounded by "Kirby Crackle"—a ring composed of a rippling black band of small black circles (fig. 1). Like other sorts of energy, the band should look like it's constantly shifting and moving. Doom's energy blasts are composed of two jagged parallel lines emanating not from his hand, but from the energy halo surrounding it (fig. 2). The energy blast itself is made of harsh, jagged lines, spreading out much like an ink splatter (fig. 3). This unrefined look gives the energy a feeling of pure, raw power.

Starfire

Starfire projects a very clean, slick-looking energy. Her "halo" is a circle around her hand, with thin, sharp points coming out from it in all directions (fig. 4). Her hand is surrounded by small black dots and circles, further indicating crackling energy (fig. 5), while her blast is simply two straight parallel lines. The contact points are similar to the energy halo: sharp, clean lines, with small black spheres indicating the point of contact. Also, the energy halos travel down the blast and surround the blast lines just like they surround her hands (fig. 6).

Professor Xavier

Professor X's telepathic powers are handled a bit differently. The energy halo surrounds his hand and his head, indicating his psionic energy (fig. 7). This is just one approach to the telepathic powers: thin, even lines in a wild swirl around his head. I find that telepathic powers are best defined when the body is almost stagnant (fig. 8), and the entirety of the energy and the blast comes from the figure's head (fig. 9). Keep in mind, though, that this method makes for a far less dynamic figure, which is usually a no-no in comics.

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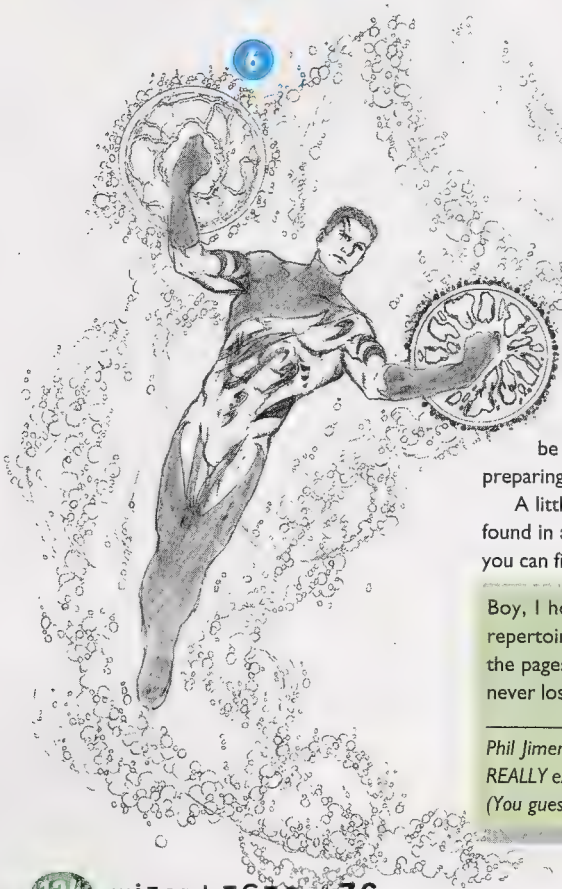
Blowing it All Up

You use a little bit of everything when you draw explosions: rules for lightning, smoke and fire apply. When energy blasts are the source of the explosion, those blasts should travel right into the center of it (fig. 1).

Explosions are a great source of light, movement, smoke and debris. So think big! Draw a big circle around what's exploding, and work out from there. Remember that the heart of the explosion is going to be white-hot, and therefore mostly white, with a few "swirls" of darkness thrown in (fig. 2). The dark clouds emanate from the edge of the circle you drew, becoming fuller and darker as they billow out (fig. 3). Sparks should be flying from the edges of the smoke (fig. 4), while jagged lines attached to the panel border help add to the explosiveness of the scene (fig. 5). Remember, an explosion is also an intense source of light.

The best example I've seen of something blowing up is the Hindenburg dirigible explosion in the '30s. If you can dig up that picture and use it for reference, you should do just fine!



Angelic Energy

I call the energy patterns that surround characters' hands or heads "energy halos." They're simply rings of energy that surround the head or hand. It's not uncommon to draw a character with energy powers (even if they're not using them) with his energy halos "on," like Tempest here (fig. 6). Not only is it a cool visual effect, but it makes the character look powerful, to boot. Of course, a character's "halos" shouldn't be on if they're eating at a restaurant, but if they're flying, swimming around or preparing to attack, you might consider drawing these aspects of their powers.

A little aside: Tempest's energy halos are actually based on images of CAT scans I found in a medical-source book. I think it's a perfect example of the sort of cool stuff you can find by looking at photographs and images in all sorts of books besides comics.

Boy, I hope you found something useful here, something you can add to your repertoire of techniques which so many other great artists have shown you through the pages of *Wizard*. Whatever you do, just keep drawing because you love it, and never lose sight of how much fun it can actually be. **W**

Phil Jimenez, penciler of DC's Tempest *mini-series and DC/Vertigo's* The Invisibles, *is REALLY excited to be working on the* Starfire *one-shot with George Pérez, coming soon from (You guessed it!) DC Comics.*

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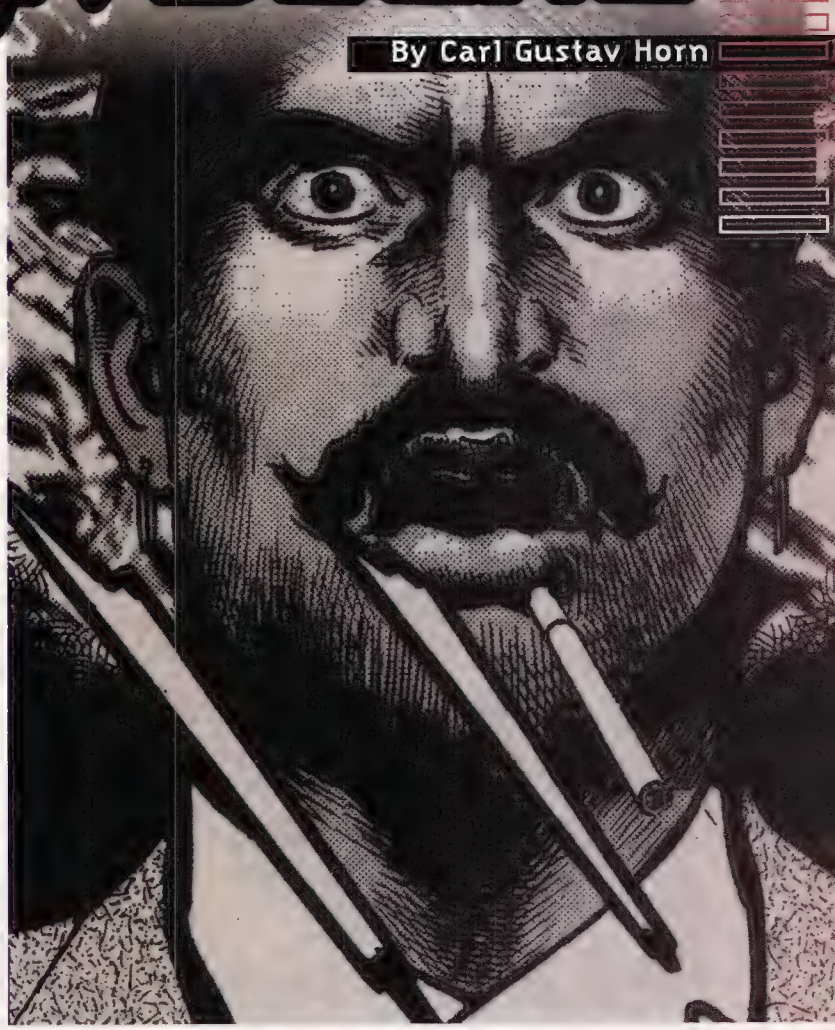
MANGA SCENE

By Carl Gustav Horn

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

MANGA'S 'PULP' FICTION

Viz Comics presents the adult side of manga with its new monthly anthology



This man's life is worth exactly $5 to assassin Mayo Kusaku in *Strain*, a *Pulp* story.

This *Pulp* is fact, not fiction.

Named for the cheap, mass-market paper that Japan's comic industry uses, Viz Comics' *Pulp* promises to give American manga fans something they've been lacking—quality stories geared toward adults.

In the past, most manga offered for American consumption focused on material geared toward Japanese teenagers. "Most of our new monthly manga titles have had a tie-in to anime or video games," says Viz Comics Editor-in-Chief Satoru Fujii. "But the average American manga fan is 20 years old, and we need a magazine which can support the kind of diverse, mature-oriented stories that American audiences are ready for, and which are a mainstay of the industry in Japan."

In keeping with that mission, most of *Pulp*'s stories are taken from Japanese magazines such as *Big Comic Spirits* and *Big Comic Superior*, which target readers between ages 20 and 30. *Pulp*'s content makes the title strictly adults only; stories will contain nudity, adult language, humor and situations, and explicit scenes of violence. It's also the best chance U.S. readers will have to experience the kind of manga that masses of Japanese adults devour every day.

For its premiere issue, *Pulp* will be squeezing out five very different offerings:

Strain

The first of *Pulp*'s five serialized stories, *Strain*, reunites the *Sanctuary* team of artist Ryoichi Ikegami and writer Sho "Buronson" Fumimura. *Strain*'s set on the streets of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Its "hero" is Mayo Kusaku, a talented young painter who paints pictures of horses. Kusaku lives off his minimum-wage day job: he's a hitman who kills for $5, because "that's all we're worth."

Strain also details the stress between the still-hungry Malaysians, who resent the Japanese who come to buy their cheap labor, and the super-rich Japanese, who see the Malaysians as hustlers trying to take them for everything they can.

The hottest-night-of-the-summer feel of *Strain* gives things a built-in edginess as the story's first installment only begins to scratch at the surface of Mayo's mysterious past.

Dance Till Tomorrow

This story, written and drawn by Naoki Yamamoto, puts away the guns (but not the girls), setting the scene among classmates at a Japanese college, where student Suekichi Terayama has so many love problems he may never finish up—and get the $5 million graduation present his rich grandfather promised him! "*Dance*'s story development is really character-oriented," says Fujii, "and it reveals itself in certain ways and moments, rather than by unraveling some intricate plot, as with *Strain*."

Graphic violence pervades the wild-styled *Black & White*, by Taiyo Matsumoto.

Black & White

There's no doubt that *Pulp*'s third flavor, *Black & White*, has the most radical art style of anything in the magazine.

Writer/artist Taiyo Matsumoto creates a hyperkinetic story of two deranged, damage-causing street kids who would give comic book madmen Milk & Cheese a run for their liquor. But he draws an equally deranged city for them to play in and wreck, with a slightly quavering line and shots arranged in a forced perspective that makes everything (and everyone) in *Black & White* look tense and quirky.

Banana Fish

The fourth story, *Banana Fish*, written and drawn by Akimi Yoshida, is a frantic mutant: a hard-boiled action story originally written for a female audience. But because Yoshida decided to drop the florid, pretty look typical of girls' manga for a clean-line realism reminiscent of *Akira*'s Katsuhiro Otomo, *Banana Fish* attracted male and female audiences alike and created a nationwide sensation. Set in New York City during the height of its mid-'80s crime and chaos, *Banana Fish* is the story of a cunning, charismatic and young gay crook named Ash. Ash's quest to find out why his older brother went insane in Vietnam leads to both the Pentagon and the Mafia wanting him dead!

Heartbroken Angels

Heartbroken Angels, by Masahiko Kikuni, is in some ways the most bizarre title published in *Pulp*. Its four-panel comic strip format may seem familiar to an American reader, and Kikuni's art is conventional, too, but a closer glance starts to reveal that his specialty is a sick humor which would have gotten "The Far Side" burned had it tried jokes like this in America. In Japan, though, Kikuni's perverse take on life has attracted a big following. "Kikuni's goal is to use surrealistic humor to attack the reader in a consciousness-changing way," says Fujii. Look for these strips to provide plenty of toilet- and off-color humor best left to those over 18.

Berkeley-based Carl Horn is a manga juggernaut crushing all in his wake. If you see him, give 'im some candy. That'll stop him dead in his tracks.

F.Y.I.

Pulp is a 128-page monthly adults-only title launching in November and retailing for $5.95. Although *Pulp* is beginning with five serialized stories, it may expand to six in the future. In addition to its manga content, the magazine will also run four columns: "PULPman Profiles," which will feature in-depth biographies and interviews with manga artists and writers, "PULP Cult," about weird scenes inside the goldmine of Asian pop culture (from the dark side of *shôjo*, or girls' comics, to '70s Japanese gangster films), "hi-fi/ lo-fi," on the Japanese music scene and "j.pop.hard.copy," an online guide.

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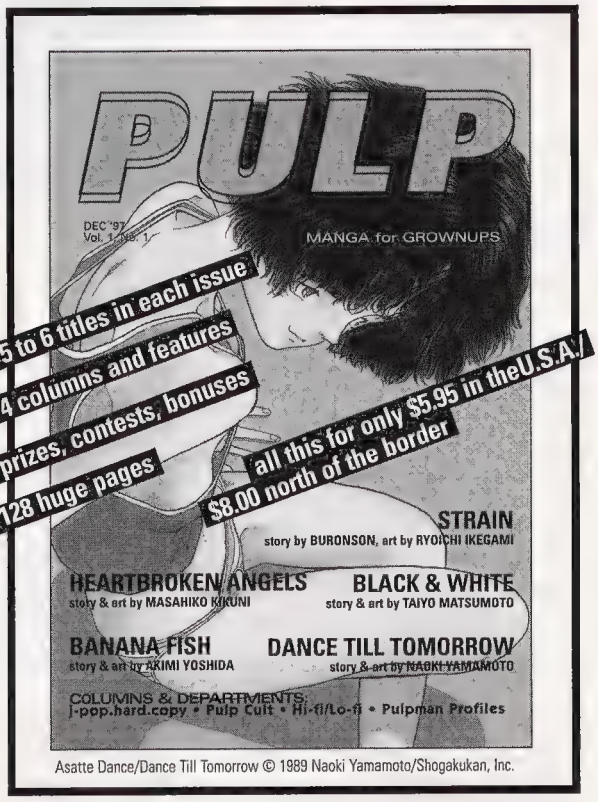
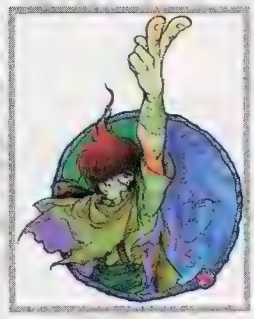


Asatte Dance/Dance Till Tomorrow © 1989 Naoki Yamamoto/Shogakukan, Inc.

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH
Must-read manga books shipping in November

Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of ANIMERICA
Cadence Books/Viz Comics

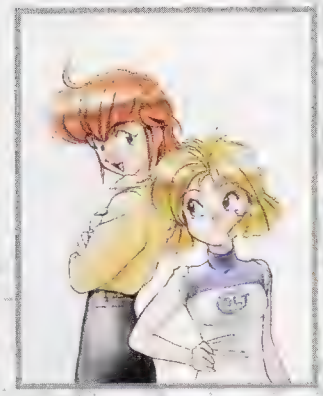
This book reprints 20 interviews with Japan's top creators of anime and manga, including Masamune Shirow (*Appleseed*), Kosuke Fujishima (*Oh My Goddess!*), Ryoichi Ikegami (*Sanctuary*), Yukito Kishiro (*Battle Angel Alita*), Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*) and Hayao Miyazaki (*My Neighbor Totoro*). Some are the only interviews ever granted by the artist to an English-language publication. *ANIMERICA* also includes filmographies and bibliographies for each creator.



Doctor!
Studio Ironcat

The doctor is in: in a post-apocalyptic wasteland by Ippongi Bang (*Ippongi Bang's Amazing Strip*), that is. Bang, who's known as the "Manga Empress of all the Asias," relates the tale of a wandering surgeon who walks the Earth with his amorphous assistant Liquido Medio, healing the sick with both spells and the scalpel!

Gunsmith Cats: Goldie vs. Misty #1 (of 7)
Dark Horse Comics



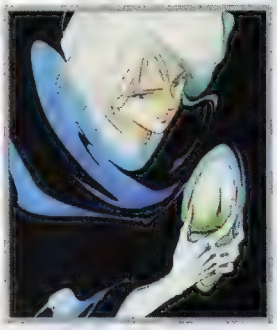
A brand-new *Cats* story arc starts in fifth gear with artist/writer Kenichi Sonoda's nastiest villain yet—the towering mob assassin Goldie, who steps between Rally and her friend, cat burglar Misty Brown. When Misty leaves prison with incriminating evidence on a Mafia don, Rally finds herself in Goldie's line of fire. But Goldie doesn't really want to kill Rally—she'd rather keep her as a pet! The Gunsmith Cats also appear in anime by A.D.V. Films. The title is for mature readers only.

Mixxzine #3
Mixx Entertainment

The bold new manga anthology magazine with something for everyone continues serializing four stories. In "Sailor Moon," the third scout, Sailor Mars, makes her first appearance; in "Magic Knight Rayearth," the heroic trio encounters Mokona, their cute, doughy guide; in "Parasyte," Shin begins to comprehend the alien plot to devour humanity; and in "Ice Blade," supercool cop Ky goes hard-core.

Neon Genesis Evangelion #3
Viz Comics

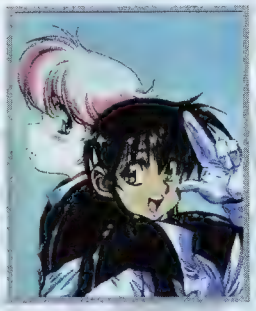
Evangelion is based on Japan's most talked-about anime, from A.D.V. Films. When Shinji refuses to pilot the Eva Unit-01, his ruthless father literally rolls out the badly wounded Rei as a substitute! It's too much for Shinji, who finally agrees to board the monstrous *Evangelion*—but what kind of monster awaits him in his first combat...? Also available in a "Special Collector's Edition," which prints the art in its original, non-reversed format—the only U.S. manga to do so!



New Vampire Miyu #3
Studio Ironcat

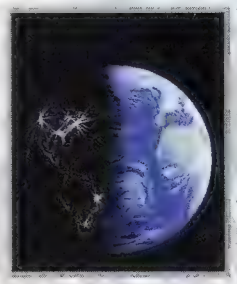
From one of Japan's most elegant manga artists, Narumi Kakino'uchi, comes Miyu, the beautiful undead maiden pledged to maintain the balance between Makai, the realm of the spirit, and Genkai, the realm of the flesh. But has the guardian betrayed her vow, and what will now be revealed about her eternal companion, Larva, as figures from his forgotten past reappear? AnimEigo will be releasing an anime series based on this book.

Plastic Little #4
CPM Manga



Little #4 sports all-new stories by Satoshi Urushihara, character designer of the "Plastic Little" anime from A.D.V. Films. Captain Tita of the *Cha Cha Maru* discovers her ship's navigator, Nichol Hawking, races cars in his spare time and is keen on entering an upcoming Grand Prix. Pairing up, how will Tita fare as Nichol captains her through the dangerous 36-hour rally? Also, the next chapter of "Intermission" will see print in this issue.

The Two Faces of Tomorrow #4 (of 13)
Dark Horse Comics



Forget IBM's Deep Blue—it's the very future of humanity at stake in this chess match of sorts between man and computer! Dr. Dyer tries to be calm as he makes his next move against Spartacus. When he switched off its power, Spartacus learned to re-route its pathways. Then Dyer disconnected the whole system, but the super-computer learned to re-wire its connections. How long will it be before Spartacus learns to eliminate its problems by getting rid of the "other player"...?

By Joyce M. Steel

X-Men's November Surprise

Ultra X-Men '97 is here! What a way to start out in November! And it's brought to you by none other than Fleer/SkyBox. This series, Fleer/SkyBox says, is the answer to all those questions that've been bangin' around in our heads about the history and timelines of them marvelous mutants. The 81-carder traces the universe-hoppin', time-travelin' adventures of the entire X-Men team, all in traditional pencil-oriented art from X-artists galore including Ed McGuinness, Shannon Denton, Roger Cruz and Joe Bennett. The backs of the cards explain everything, and even feature an interconnecting timeline relating all the team members to each other in a puzzling sort of way.

Chase cards include a nine-card "Deadpool Party" Peel-Away set (one per every four packs or 1:4), in which the top layer of the card peels away to reveal a completely different image underneath. The set also includes an eight-card "New Recruits" foil-stamped set (1:3); a four-card "Wanted Poster" set on woodgrain stock (1:12) and four mini-poster cards (1:1) explaining the series on the front and come together to form that X-Men poster on the backs (eight cards per pack, $1.99 per pack).

TREKKING BACKWARD

Also from Fleer/SkyBox, *Star Trek: The Original Series 1966-67*, which was originally set to release in mid-October, has been delayed until mid-December.

OVERPOWERING IMAGE

And for collectible card game (CCG) fans, *OverPower*'s long-awaited expansion incorporating characters from Image Comics into the game is finally gonna make it into the fans' hands this month. Look for booster packs of the game—which are fully compatible with every *OverPower* release—featuring characters like Spawn, Gen13, Witchblade, ShadowHawk, Savage Dragon and a slew of others, all with original art by top Image and Marvel artists.

DARKCHYLDE GROWS

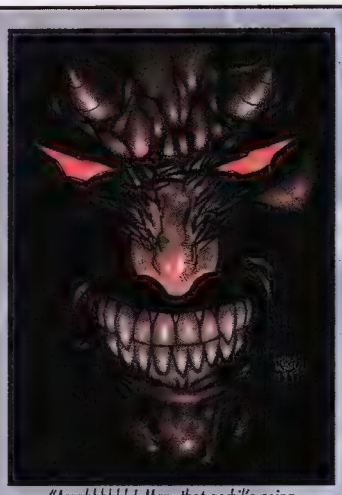
Up next is Krome Productions, whose recent alliance with Randy Queen has produced the first set based on his fan fave comic, *Darkchylde*. The series follows last month's preview set, which featured six oversized Chromium cards in a metallic folder box, with an suggested retail price of $9.95. In the full set, Krome and Queen promise all the horror, romance, humor and suspense of the hit book, packed into 50 Chromium cards. Art chores are being handled by Queen himself, along with guest talent like Joe Jusko, Joe Quesada, Billy Tucci, Tony Daniel, Dale Keown and more. Chasing the series are six "State of the Art" Chromium cards (three per box) and a parallel set of 50 HoloChrome stickers (one per pack) (four cards and one sticker per pack, suggested retail, $2.50 per pack).

LOST IN SPACE

Finally, don't let the month pass you by without pickin' up a few packs of Inkworks' new *Lost in Space Archives* cards. This 81-card set is a serious lot of fun, with images taken right off the boob tube and text that traces the tale of one of the silliest sci-fi shows ever! Never seen it? Check it out weekdays on the Sci-Fi Channel; you'll pee in your pants, I promise ya. Anyway, the set also includes a nine-card preview of the big Lost in Space movie card set, which'll be out next April. Chasers include nine Robinson Family cards (1:11), six Alien Wonders cards (1:17) and one "Danger Will Robinson" Robo-Metallic Card (1:108) (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

And tune back next month for the big '97 season finale, when we'll recap the best, the worst...and a whole buncha stuff in between. W

Joyce Steel unfortunately took Exit 13 off the New Jersey Turnpike and found herself lost in space.



"Argghhhhhh! Man, that gerbil's going crazy down there!"
Ultra X-Men '97

"Captain James Tiberius Kirk... badass. Yeah!"
Star Trek: The Original Series 1966-67

"See Billy? There are good dogs and there are bad dogs, and those are two bad, bad dogs."
Lost in Space Archives

SUPER HOLIDAY TOY COLLECTORS' GUIDE!

ToyFare™ #6

THE GUIDE TO COLLECTIBLE TOYS

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ON SALE IN DECEMBER

Wizard casts the Sin City movie!

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos not credited are from the Everett Collection.

It's a no-brainer.

With ultra-violent, brain-splattering movies by Quentin Tarantino and John Woo being gobbled up by audiences, it would make sense to do a movie based on Frank Miller's *Sin City* comic book series. Here's why: You got crime *noir*, violence up the yin-yang, savvy heroes, sultry vixens and a silent ninja chick who'd take your head off before you'd blink. It's got it all!

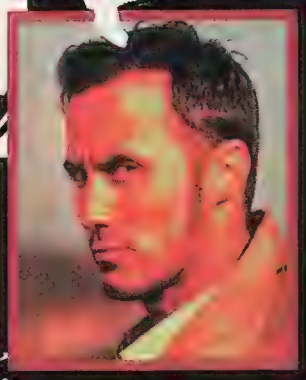
In fact, if directed by a Mr. Tarantino or Woo, it would kick huge ass. Even better if it were filmed in its actual comic book style: black and white. (Hollywood should take more chances like that, anyway.)

If we had a gazillion-dollar budget to make a "Sin City" flick, what follows is who we'd cast in it.

© Gerardo Sorazu/Outline

DWIGHT McCARTHY

We'd have Sin City's resident trouble magnet be portrayed by Timothy Hutton, whose edgier side has been seen in "The Dark Half" and "The Falcon and the Snowman."

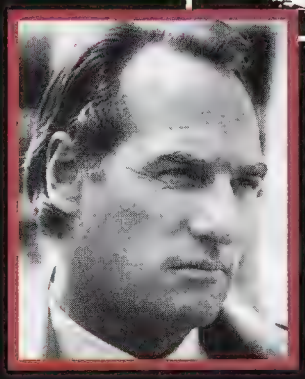


MARV

Robert Burke (seen in Showtime's "Dust Devil" flick) has just the right chiseled look and kick-ass attitude to play Sin City's resident bruiser.

JOHN HARTIGAN

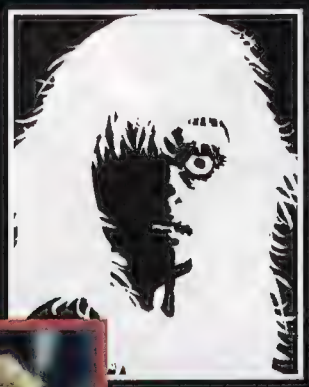
Playing our gritty by-the-book cop would be Craig T. Nelson. But forget his role on "Coach," and think about his suspense films like "The Osterman Weekend" and "Poltergeist." A couple scars slapped on his noggin and we'd be all set.



© Catherine Leroy/Outline

MIHO

Tamlyn Tomita ("The Joy Luck Club") would be a great match for Old Town's silent ninja assassin.

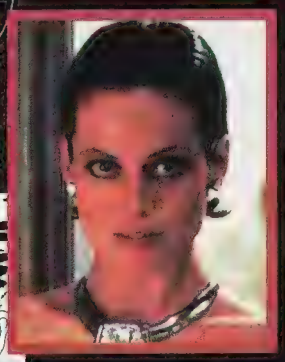


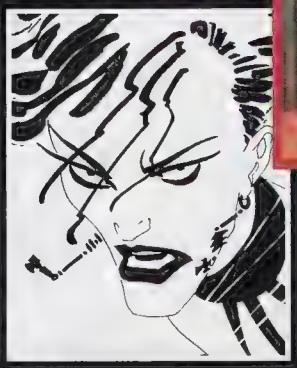
NANCY CALLAHAN

With just the right amount of makeup, Kristy Swanson ("Buffy the Vampire Slayer") would be just right for Kadie's Club Pecos' all-star stripper.

GAIL

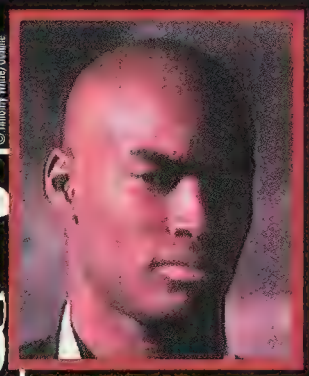
Playing Dwight's lover/prostitute would be Sigourney Weaver, who had a turn playing a call girl in "Half Moon Street."





AVA

Gillian Anderson ("The X-Files") has that sexy side, but give her a mean streak and she'd be aces for Dwight's deceitful ex-lover.



© Timothy White/Outline

MANUTE

This hired muscle bad-ass needs to be big and scowling. The model Tyson has the perfect pissed-off look to pull off Manute.

DOUGLAS KLUMP

The second half of "Fat Man and Little Boy," this hired mercenary needs the dark wit of Kevin Pollak, who was on the money like that in "The Usual Suspects."

© Lorenzo Agius/Outline

BLUE EYES

This alluring assassin, alias Delia, needs pouty lips, an urge to kill people and, well, blue eyes. Sherilyn Fenn has the physical attributes and that "urge" can be found in her role on "Twin Peaks."

© Barry Hollywood/Outline

Matthew Pinfield photo courtesy of MTV

BURT SCHLUBB

"Fat Man" needs to be a bloated dimwit. Annoying MTV v.j. Matthew Pinfield can handle that type of role well.

SEN. ROARKE

The power-monger of Sin City must be played by a guy who can pull off a corrupt politician. Charles Durning did that shtick in "The Final Countdown."

© Jeff Slocomb/Outline

JUNIOR ROARKE

As a monstrosity of modern medical science, the wicked Junior was revived from a coma—only to look like Christopher Lloyd's Uncle Fester from "The Addams Family"! And Lloyd can be a dark character, as best seen in "Dennis the Menace."

RAZOR Gothic

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Krome Productions and London Night Studios proudly present Razor: Gothic- The Trading Card Set. This ground-breaking set features the return of Razor creator EVERETTE HARTSOE to the artistic arena. 50 illustrations by one of the masters of illustrated goth. SPECIAL Chase Subsets include-6 card painted set by none-other than the likes of Pat Meadows, Vincent Evans and Armando Huerta (3 per box) Limited Edition Chromium® HOT BOX: As a special bonus, Limited edition Chromium® Hot Boxes will be randomly inserted throughout the series. Retailer Incentive: With every 6-box purchase, you have the opportunity to purchase 1 Razor: Gothic Limited Edition Hot Box. Packaging: 6 Chromium® Cards per pack, 36 packs per box. 10 boxes per case. SRP: $2.50 per pack.

ORDER NOW!

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TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

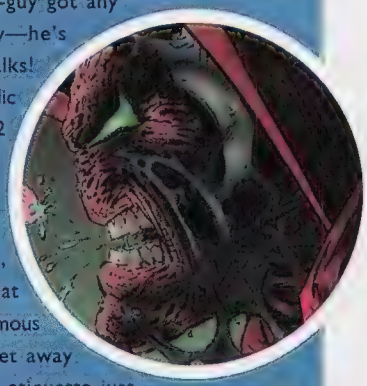
This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WITCHBLADE

Happiness. That's what Witchblade's all about today. Y'see, fans are happy that Top Cow's "guaranteed shipping" policy means a new issue of *Witchblade* every month, come Hell or high water. And Top Cow is happy 'cause it just signed penciler Michael Turner to a new contract, meaning Turner will be drawing *Witchblade* for a long time to come. And Turner's happy 'cause that contract gives him enough money to buy a new bike, a new pair of orthopedic shoes for his grandma and enough beer to float the Love Boat. Hey! Beer and Merrill Stubing on the Lido deck! Now that makes *us* happy!

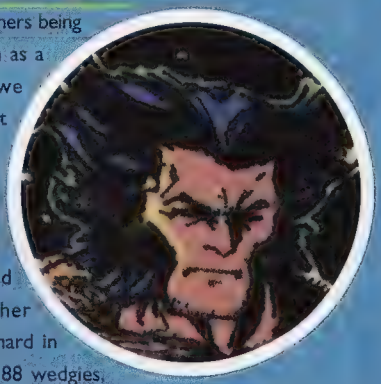
2) SPAWN

Blee-uch! Hasn't Spawny-guy got any manners? Look carefully—he's actually spitting as he talks! Man, if he went to Catholic school, he'd get the 12 inches of justice (that's a ruler, for those of you who don't bow to Rome) right across the knuckles, toot-sweet! We think that Todd McFarlane's most famous creation thinks he can get away with serious breaches of etiquette just 'cause he's been in a major feature film, he's on an HBO weekly cartoon series and his comic is consistently a top seller. The worst part? Judging from the average fan-on-the-street reaction, he's right. So much for good manners.



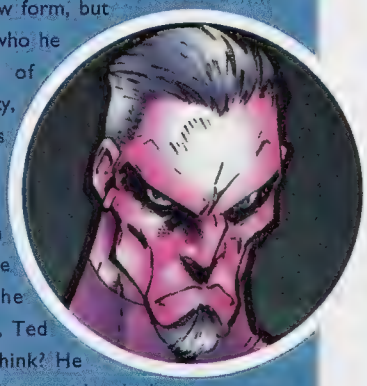
3) WOLVERINE

Speaking of good manners being worth about as much as a well-used hankie, we present our next subject: Wolverine. In his slightly nasty comic career, Wolvie has (by our unofficial count) killed 109 bad guys, punched another 4,867 bad guys real hard in the head, doled out 88 wedgies, refused a dozen perfectly good haircuts, panty-raided Rogue twice and squeezed the Charmin 53 times. Still, every fanboy from Kokomo to Kalamazoo loves the lug. Guess it's that tough-talkin', street-walkin', knuckle-bustin' take-no-crap-from-man-woman-child-or-small-mammal attitude he's sportin'. That, and the fact he's in a kajillion books a month.



4) BASTION

Who *is* Bastion? Hot off making the X-Men's lives pure unadulterated hell in the "Zero Tolerance" crossover, Bastion just may be the hottest mystery mutant since that Wolverine guy. Marvel's goons let slip that Bastion is a pre-existing character in a new form, but they haven't told us just who he is. We've seen a ton of speculation as to his identity, with leading candidates including Larry Trask, Bolivar Trask, Nimrod, the Master Mold, *Wizard*'s own Marc Wilkofsky and the Senior Senator from the Commonwealth of Mass., Ted Kennedy. What do we think? He just looks like Leonard Nimoy with a bad skin condition to us.



5) SPIDER-MAN

Hey! With the addition of *Marvel Team-Up*, there are now *five* monthly Spider-titles! And in addition to comic appearances, Spidey's mug is plastered on every kinda merchandise you can imagine, from T-shirts to oversized Depends undergarments for spastic-bladder fanboys. With all this work he's doin' for the slave-drivin' Marvel Corp., we hope he gets good benefits—an IRA, maybe a dental plan. If not, we think he should unionize with the Hulk and bust heads. Power to the people!

6) THE DARKNESS

Jackie Estacado—The Darkness—is like a smorgasbord of sin. He's a mob hitman. That covers "thou shalt not kill." He's a womanizer. That covers "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's chick." And worst of all, he's got that damn stringy comic book hair always hanging in his face, covering "thou shalt be able to see, hot dammit, lest the Angelus blindside you and knock your friggin' teeth out 'cause you can't see her coming." That's Commandment #11 for those of you scoring at home.

7) BLINK

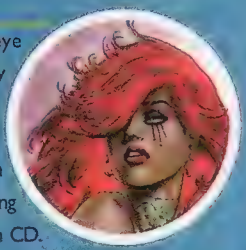
Remember last month? Sure you do. We ran the "Top 10 Still Dead Heroes and Villains" list. And Blink was on it. This month, we're back to our regular list, AND BLINK IS STILL ON IT! Geez, Louise! Dead or alive (she's still dead), the X-Men's teleportin' chickee is one *muy* popular character. So in comics, where you can be dead and then get better, why the heck doesn't Marvel bring her back? It's beyond us. The fans speak every month: They want Blink back.

8) DARKCHYLDE

Now, li'l Miz Ariel Chylde here—while she starts out lookin' pretty darned great—usually ends up pretty darned ugly. Y'see, she can take the shape of and become anything from her dreams. Since she's a nightmare type of girl, she usually winds up looking like some monster that's a cross between Mike Tyson and the Predator. But if we had that power, we'd look a little different. Come to think of it, we'd probably look a lot like a Taco Bell Burrito Supreme or a plague coming down on France.

9) DAWN

We know the three-teardrop eye thingee is Dawn's trademark, but why cry? The *Lucifer's Halo* paperback is comin' out, reprinting the *Dawn* mini-series. Plus, there's a Dawn statue in the works, and Dawn's even appearing on the cover of a new Gary Numan CD. Maybe she's crying 'cause she knows she's going into cold storage. The next Dawn comic project won't be coming out until December of 1999, which is enough to make a comic character *and* a legion of slobberin' fans start cryin'.



10) HULK

"RRRGGGHHH! Hulk smash puny human! Hulk smash whoever draw him with tiny head and shoulders as wide as aircraft carrier!" Or not. Actually, Green Genes is gaining popularity on a daily basis due to the artist on his book: One Mister Adam Kubert. Seems Adam's good at drawing big, giant...uh...hulking characters, and art aficionados 'round the comic world are turning on to the super hulked-up Hulk. The jade giant is looking bigger than ever, which means he just may get more popular than ever.

MORT OF THE MONTH

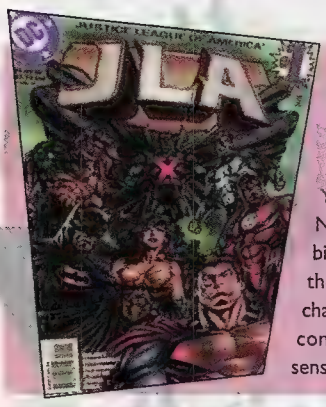
Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

HUMBUG

Bow and tremble before Humbug, he who commands...*amplified bug noises*? Yup. No typo here. Seems that Buck Mitty (sounds like a porno star to us) was a professor of entomology (that's the study of bugs), when his university funding was cut off. So he turned to insect-related crime to get more dough! He recorded bug noises and played 'em back on a Walkman at super-high volume to pop tires and knock people loopy and stuff. As if this weren't bad enough, he also wore stupid canvas hi-top tennie-runners and a big "HB" on his forehead. Thankfully, Spider-Man kicked his ass and he disappeared after one issue.

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are the back issues burning up the charts in October.**

top 10 comics



1. JLA #1

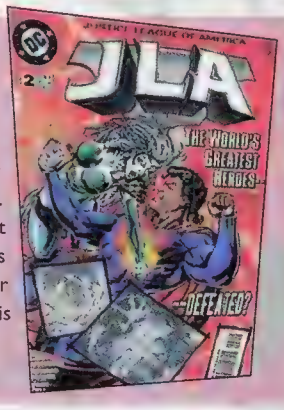
WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Yee-haw! That's right! It's "yee" and "haw" *both* as *JLA* books occupy both the Number One and Number Two slots in this month's merry little countdown. 'Twould appear that *JLA* is about the biggest thing going with comic collectors since pre-sliced cheese. Now just why is that? Let us count the ways: First and foremost, people seem to dig that the current JLA is the "A-list" of DC's characters, featuring such stalwarts as Superman, Batman, Flash and Wonder Woman all under one convenient cover. Plus, they like the funkified writing of Grant Morrison, who brings a weird sensibility to superheroes and sets up the great (continued next blurb)... **LAST MONTH: 1**

2. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

...comic book "moment" (Like when Luthor cuffed the Joker in #11 to keep him in line!) better than durned near anyone else. They also like the angular, in-yer-face layout style of Howard Porter. But most importantly, *JLA* is part of the vast international conspiracy that forces high-interest credit cards down our throats under the guise of blatant consumerism equaling "the good life" and brings us cloned sheep and the Spice Girls. So even if you couldn't give a rat's ass about DC, Morrison or Porter, you'd probably like *JLA* anyhow. There's really nothing you can do. Submit. Resistance is futile. Just relax and go with the flow, huh? **LAST MONTH: 4**

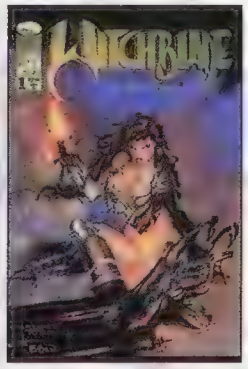


3. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Speaking of international conspiracies, Top Cow is trying to set up one of its own and conquer the world via *The Darkness*. As of this moment, *The Darkness* is actually sliding ahead of *Witchblade* in terms of back-issue demand. Why, you ask? Well, *The Darkness* hasn't been around as long, so many collectors are still filling in their runs. Plus, *Witchblade* prices have gone so high that *The Darkness* appears to be (comparatively) a bargain. Put 'em together and you've got Jackie Estacado outpacing his female counterpart. **LAST MONTH: 3**

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Speaking of international conspiracies, didja know that Top Cow publishes its comics in a variety of languages 'round the world, including Portuguese for the Brazilian market? 'Tis true! And our well-placed spies tell us that *Witchblade* #1 is every bit as hot on the streets of Rio as it is in the U.S., even though the creators go by different names. Christina Z. is known as "*la chica* Zee" down in Brazil, while David Wohl is called "*el escribador pequeño*." But D-Tron is still D-Tron in any language. **LAST MONTH: 2**

NUMBER FIVE

5. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

In an informal poll of random *Wizard* staffers, three out of six people said "hooters" or a variation thereof when asked to associate a word with "Darkchylde." But dad-gum it, *Darkchylde* is about more than just hooters! It's about a young woman both blessed and cursed by her nightmares and her constant struggle to both control and outrace the dark dreams that plague her. But her hooters are kinda nice too, and we all like hooters, so we think of those when we think "Darkchylde." **LAST MONTH: 5**

6. BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #1

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTIST: Tim Sale

Everyone likes a mystery. That's why (dear God in Heaven, we're not making this up) "Murder, She Wrote" is one of the top-rated TV shows of all time. And that's why *Batman: The Long Halloween* is so mind-numbingly popular—it's a good, compelling mystery. "Who is Holiday?" has become the most-asked fanboy question since "When do ya think all these zits are gonna go away?" As the 13-issue maxi-series comes to a close, *B:TLH* is actually picking up steam—a testimony to its strong following. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

NUMBER SIX

7. THUNDERBOLTS #1

NUMBER SEVEN

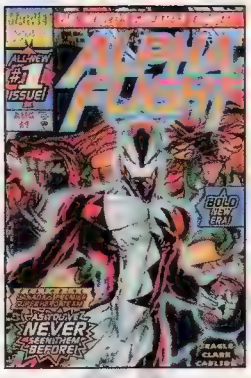
WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTISTS: Mark Bagley and Vince Russell

Okay, it took a month or two for the back-issue buzz to build, but people are now snarfing up *Thunderbolts* faster than 99-cent Chicken McNuggets. Why're they gettin' on board now? Well, it's finally become apparent with a few issues in circulation that this book ain't no one-trick pony. Sure, the T-Bolts are really the insidious Masters of Evil in disguise, and that's good for shock value and all, but we now see that aside from one great gimmick, it's also one great book. **LAST MONTH: 17**

8. ALPHA FLIGHT #1

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTISTS: Scott Clark and Chris Carlson

Just as more people are turning on to *Thunderbolts*, so too are they turning on to *Alpha Flight*, but they're doing it for the same reasons why they like *Batman: The Long Halloween*. Confused? So are readers, and that's the point. *'Flight* is chock-full o' mysteries that readers just *have* to see explained! Why is Sasquatch now mindless? How did Guardian get de-aged to 19 years old? And what happens when it rains and those spandex superhero costumes get wet? Wouldn't they chafe like a bugger? We think so. **LAST MONTH: 10**



NUMBER EIGHT

NUMBER NINE

9. THE MEN IN BLACK #1

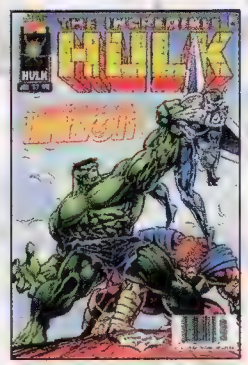
WRITER: Lowell Cunningham
ARTIST: Sandy Carruthers

Simple drill, here we go: Comic book published. Called *The Men in Black*. Looks cheesy. Black and white. Published by something called "Aircel Comics." No one cares. Print run is about eight copies. Later come canny marketing guys. Canny marketing guys sell it to Hollywood guys, who'll buy anything. Beats million-to-one odds. Becomes funny hit movie that everyone digs. Later come comic collectors. Collectors like neat, shiny things like comic books on which hit movies are based. Demand goes nuts. Now Number Nine. Happy ending. Roll credits. **LAST MONTH: 9**

10. INCREDIBLE HULK #449

WRITER: Peter David
ARTISTS: Mike Deodato, Jr. and Tom Wegrzyn

Remember those kind words we said about *Thunderbolts* at Number Seven? No? Then you've been sniffing too much Elmer's. Get off the stuff, kid. Anyhoo, those kind words lead back to here, 'cause *Hulk* #449 is the first appearance of the Thunderbolts. And every collector worth his Mylar is now salivating over this book. In this ish, ol' Jade Jaws has a faint hint of recognition when he encounters Meteorite (who's really Moonstone) and thinks he knows her. Hmmm. The Hulk's on to them. Can the T-Bolts' ruse last?



NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. SPAWN #1 IMAGE
12. FANTASTIC FOUR #1 MARVEL
13. PREACHER #1 DC/VERTIGO
14. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #1 IMAGE
15. WITCHBLADE #2 IMAGE
16. JLA #3 DC
17. THE DARKNESS #0 IMAGE
18. THE DARKNESS #2 IMAGE
19. RESURRECTION MAN #1 DC
20. CURSE OF THE SPAWN #1 IMAGE

MARKET WATCH

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · By Lars Pearson

MORRISON MANIA!

Strewth! On either side of the Atlantic, Scottish writer Grant Morrison is hotter than a ticket to have crumpets with the Queen!

He's been scribing for years, but Morrison's success in the back-issue market is only very recent and can be traced back to three simple letters: *JLA*. Having soared as the writer of DC's No. 1 book, Morrison keeps grabbing attention with projects such as *The Flash* and *Vampirella* (both of which he just started co-writing with buddy Mark Millar), and even out-of-the-mainstream stuff like his creator-owned *The Invisibles* from Vertigo is showing life.

Not long ago, you'd have found much of Morrison's runs on *Animal Man* #1-#26 or *Doom Patrol* #19-#63 in the quarter boxes, but amidst a *JLA*-reader feeding frenzy, these books are now commanding cover price and more. With interest in Morrison rising on all levels, here's some oft-forgotten Morrison stories to keep your eyes on:

• *Spawn* #16-#18 (Image)—*Spawn* is such a big name that Morrison's writing may not be an overriding factor in these going up or down. But he did write 'em, and fans are seeking them out. Keep watching.

• *Swamp Thing* #140-#143 (DC/Vertigo)—Morrison and Millar powered Swampy up to godlike levels in a story that was all-but-forgotten...until now.

• *Hellblazer* #23-#25 (DC/Vertigo)—When fans realized *Sandman* legend Neil Gaiman had written *Hellblazer* #27, the issue skyrocketed in price. Morrison's short three-issue *Hellblazer* run could follow suit.

Is the JLA running the risk of overexposure?

JLA Futures?

Speaking of *JLA*, the senior-varsity DC team is unstoppable on the back-issue market, and even the reprinting of *JLA* #1-#9 in trade-paperback form hasn't slowed the trading of the originals. But with the upcoming "franchising" of the Justice League with *JLA Junior*, *JLA: Year One* and *JLA: Paradise Lost*, there is some long-term risk the upward price trend could snap.

It's happened before. The *Justice League* series from creators Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis in the late 1980s was megapopular...for a short time. With the success of *Justice League*, an entire JL line (including *Justice League Europe*, *Justice League Task Force* and *Extreme Justice*) was developed. The stretching out of characters and concept into multiple titles and heavy output eventually made the whole franchise crash hard.

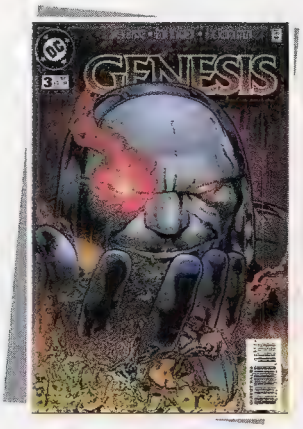
If DC produces spinoffs like *JLA Junior* and the sort, which keep the core JLA characters in the *JLA* book, prices are likely to stay steady or even rise on *JLA*. But if the *JLA* loses its singularity (or characters) to copycat titles, prices may well fall. Either way, DC's got its first certifiable mega-hit in a long time, so the next six months or so will be interesting to watch.

Keep your eyes peeled for other older books written by the white-hot Grant Morrison.

'Genesis' Wave Fizzles Out

It was a story about the almighty Source "dying"—and on the back-issue market, it probably will.

Genesis, DC's recent all-DC Universe crossover, examined how all the gods and superheroes in the DCU owed their powers to the same energy stockpile—a source known simply as "The Source." The four-issue weekly miniseries was ordered in big quantity (second only to *JLA* for DC books in August), and although the concept interested some, most fans seemed

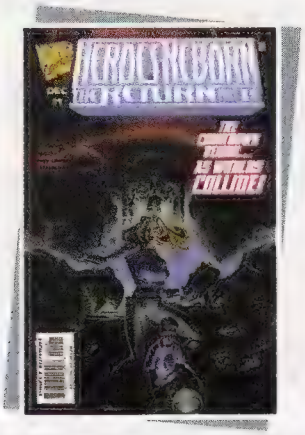


Despite big numbers, fans thought *Genesis* was stillborn with no major ramifications.

to rate the story as below-average, mainly because it lacked major consequences.

In a major crossover, many fans expect long-lasting effects—maybe not the rampant revision of DC's 1985-86 series *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, but something. Even the death of Hal Jordan (Green Lantern) in last year's *Final Night* crossover stood out.

But apart from some minor power-switches and ex-Wonder Girl/Darkstar Donna Troy ambiguously complaining about "feeling weird" (heralding a new heroic identity for her), *Genesis* seems to have changed little. And given DC's track record of having crossovers such as *Millennium* and *War of the Gods* end up in the discount boxes, there seems little to spare *Genesis* the same fate.



Variants go to the next level with *Heroes Reborn: The Return* #1.

Heroes Return... to Comic Zone?

Variant covers, variant covers, variant covers. Seems like an old story. But here's a new twist: Single-retailer variants. Mail-order companies like American Entertainment and Comic Cavalcade have offered a bevy of 'em for years. Now a storefront retailer is getting into the game on a rather high-profile book.

Minnesota-based Comic Zone is offering 8,000 copies of *Heroes Reborn: The Return* #1 with a painted variant cover featuring the Invisible Woman, Franklin Richards and Man-Thing by Dave DeVries (*Doom Patrol*), shown above. The variant went free to any customer who ordered the entire *Return* mini-series, and if any are left over, they'll be offered for sale at $5 each—probably at the exact second you read this. Is this edition absolutely guaranteed to jack up in price? 'Course not, but it gives you collectors and completists something to live for. W

Wizard Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson is from Iowa, where he used to bathe with goat soap. But he insists "that's neither here nor there." We agree.

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

Bobo Martin
1 **Grant Morrison**
JLA, The Invisibles

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Mark Waid**
Ka-Zar, Captain America

3 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

Paul Schiraldi
4 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman

Paul Schiraldi
5 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City; upcoming: Avengers

6 **Joe Kelly**
Deadpool, X-Men

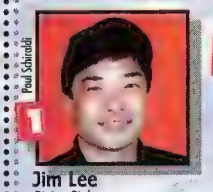
J. Schuyler
7 **Scott Lobdell**
Fantastic Four

Paul Schiraldi
8 **Frank Miller**
Sin City

Al Ortega
9 **James Robinson**
Starman, Ash

10 **Steven T. Seagle**
Alpha Flight, Uncanny X-Men

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

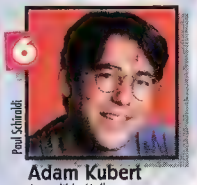

Paul Schiraldi
1 **Jim Lee**
Divine Right

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Joe Madureira**
upcoming: *Battle Chasers*

3 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

Jim McHugh
4 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

Paul Schiraldi
5 **Alex Ross**
Uncle Sam


Paul Schiraldi
6 **Adam Kubert**
Incredible Hulk

C. Blankenhorn
7 **Andy Kubert**
Ka-Zar

Al Ortega
8 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men

9 **J. Scott Campbell**
upcoming: *Danger Girl*

Al Ortega
10 **Chris Bachalo**
Uncanny X-Men

***Pencilers and painters**
***Wizard*'s Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

BURIED TREASURE

CAPTAIN AMERICA #168

Looking for the first appearance of Thunderbolts team leader Citizen V? Don't bother with *Thunderbolts* #1. Try instead... *Captain America* #168.

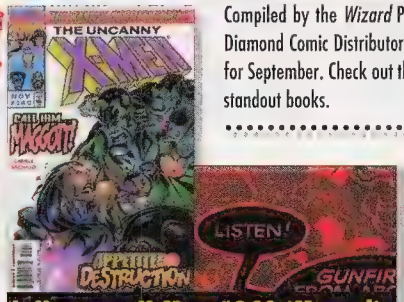
Yep. By now, everyone knows the T-bolts' dark secret is the fact that they're really the Masters of Evil in disguise. That means V is actually...Baron Helmut Zemo! But in addition to the Baron and the Citizen, ol' Helmut actually had a *third* identity. And he appeared *first*, right here, as The Phoenix.

In this ish, Zemo seeks revenge on Cap for his father's death. But in true supervillain fashion, he winds up screwing himself. So pick up *Cap* #168 if you're looking for a cool *Thunderbolts* tie-in...or if you're looking to find out how Zemo's face wound up looking like a bag of melted caramels. ■ *LP*

WIZARD™ TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of SEPTEMBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for September. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books.



1. Uncanny X-Men #349 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #69 (Marvel)
3. Spawn #66 (Image/McFarlane)
4. Fantastic Four #13 (Marvel)
5. Wolverine #118 (Marvel)
6. Iron Man #13 (Marvel)
7. Avengers #13 (Marvel)
8. Ascension #1 (Image/Top Cow)
9. JLA #12 (DC)
10. The Darkness #8 (Image/Top Cow)
11. Captain America #13 (Marvel)
12. Generation X #32 (Marvel)
13. Curse of the Spawn #13 (Image/McFarlane)
14. X-Man #32 (Marvel)
15. X-Force #71 (Marvel)
16. X-Factor #139 (Marvel)
17. Gen13 #23 (Image/WildStorm)
18. Cable #48 (Marvel)
19. Divine Right #1 (Image/WildStorm)
20. JLA Annual #1 (DC)
21. Incredible Hulk #458 (Marvel)
22. New Mutants #1 (Marvel)
23. Tales of the Witchblade #3 (Image/Top Cow)
24. Amazing Spider-Man #428 (Marvel)
25. Gambit #3 (Marvel)
26. Excalibur #114 (Marvel)
27. Alpha Flight #4 (Marvel)
28. Peter Parker: Spider Man #85 (Marvel)
29. Superman #129 (DC)
30. Psylocke & Archangel: Crimson Dawn #4 (Marvel)
31. Spectacular Spider-Man #251 (Marvel)
32. Action Comics #739 (DC)
33. Adventures of Superman #552 (DC)
34. Superman: The Man of Steel #73 (DC)
35. Quicksilver #1 (Marvel)
36. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #100 (DC)
37. Batman #548 (DC)
38. Batman/Predator III: Blood Ties #1 (DC)
39. Sensational Spider-Man #21 (Marvel)
40. Deadpool #10 (Marvel)
41. The Tenth #1 (Image/McFarlane)
42. KISS: The Psycho Circus #3 (Image/McFarlane)
43. Batman: The Long Halloween #12 (DC)
44. Detective Comics #715 (DC)
45. Thunderbolts #8 (Marvel)
46. Green Lantern #92 (DC)
47. Gen13 Bootleg #11 (Image/WildStorm)
48. The Flash #130 (DC)
49. Preacher #31 (DC)
50. The Flash #131 (DC)
51. Supergirl #15 (DC)
52. The X-Files #34 (Topps)
53. Nightwing #14 (DC)
54. Maverick #3 (Marvel)
55. Pitt #15 (Full Bleed Studios)
56. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #68 (DC)
57. Ka-Zar #7 (Marvel)
58. Star Wars: Dark Force Rising #5 (D.H.)
59. Speed Force #1 (DC)
60. Spider-Man Unlimited #18 (Marvel)
61. Catwoman #51 (DC)
62. Heroes for Hire #5 (Marvel)
63. WildC.A.T.s #42 (Image/WildStorm)
64. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight Ann. #7 (DC)
65. Robin #47 (DC)
66. Wonder Woman #127 (DC)
67. S. Wars: T. of the Jedi—F. of the Sith Empire #4 (D.H.)
68. Xena: Warrior Princess #2 (Topps)
69. Vampirella/Shi #1 (Harris)
70. DV8 #11 (Image/WildStorm)
71. Elektra #12 (Marvel)
72. Marvel Team-Up #3 (Marvel)
73. Elseworlds' Finest #2 (DC)
74. Venom: Finale #1 (Marvel)
75. Silver Surfer #133 (Marvel)
76. Gen13 #1: Special 3-D Edition (Image/WildStorm)
77. Mage: The Hero Defined #3 (Image Central)
78. Shi: The Series #2 (Crusade)
79. The Flash Secret Files #1 (DC)
80. Shi: Heaven and Earth #2 (Crusade)
81. Catwoman Plus #1 (DC)
82. Starman #36 (DC)
83. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—In T. Empire's Service #2 (D.H.)
84. Destiny: A Chronicle of Deaths Foretold #1 (DC)
85. Ka-Zar '97 (Marvel)
86. Shi: Nightstalkers #1 (Crusade)
87. Daredevil #369 (Marvel)
88. Journey into Mystery #514 (Marvel)
89. Aquaman #38 (DC)
90. Azrael #35 (DC)
91. The Kents #4 (DC)
92. Teen Titans #14 (DC)
93. What If? #102 (Marvel)
94. WetWorks #33 (Image/WildStorm)
95. Hitman #20 (DC)
96. The Maxx #33 (Image/1 Before E)
97. Green Arrow #126 (DC)
98. Superboy #45 (DC)
99. Impulse #31 (DC)
100. Starman Annual #2 (DC)

ASCENSION RISES!

• ***Ascension* #1** (No. 8): Yow! How could *Ascension*, a brand-new Top Cow title, beat out hits like *JLA*? *Ascension* isn't a spinoff of an existing hit, and creators David Finch (*Cyberforce*) and Batt (*The Darkness*) have never been top-tier sales-getters. But the Cow has been pushing *Ascension* like crazy through a number of avenues, including the recently released *Ascension #0* bagged with the *Wizard Top Cow Special*. Looks like a huge push equals huge sales.

• ***Divine Right* #1** (No. 19): Ranking at No. 19 isn't bad…unless you're Jim Lee. The fan-fave penciler has been so successful, he's like basketball star Michael Jordan—you expect the world out of him every time. But even when you add figures from the *Divine Right Voyager Pack* (a polybagged version with a *StormWatch* #1 preview), *Divine Right* still couldn't beat out *Ascension*. The key? A decided *lack* of a push from WildStorm. Which they did on purpose. According to WildStorm, they want word-of-mouth to help the book's numbers grow.

• ***Alpha Flight* #4** (No. 27), ***Heroes for Hire* #5** (No. 62): Damn, these titles are relentless! *Alpha Flight* and *Heroes for Hire* posted *gains*, while most books of issue #4 or #5 vintage usually drop. But then again, it's a quiet moment before Marvel's "Heroes Return" titles hit, so these new kids are still soaking up fans' attention.

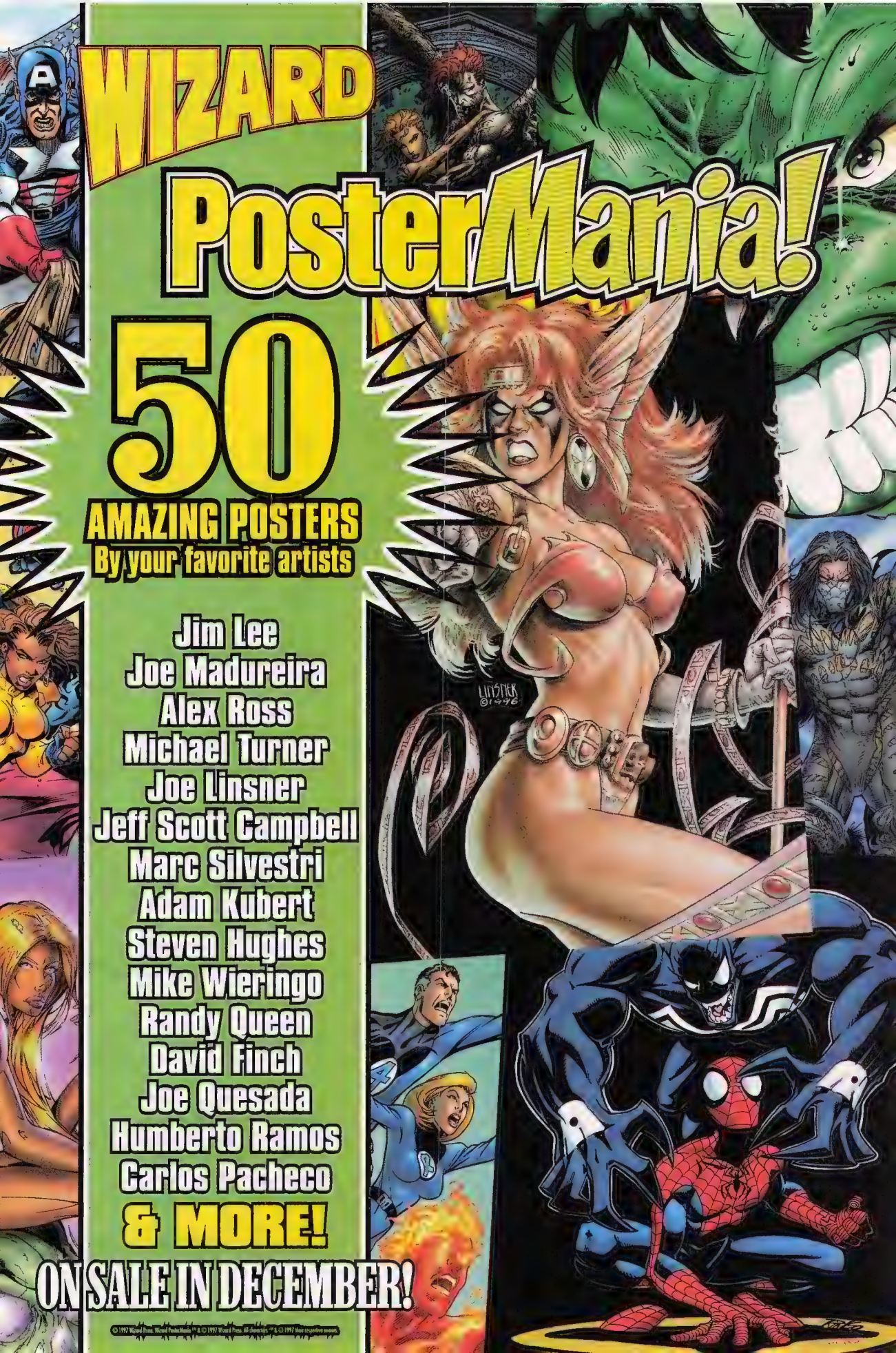
• ***Marvel Team-Up* #3** (No. 72): Last month, *Marvel Team-Up* was No. 112. This month, it zoomed to No. 72. With a bounce like that, you'd think the X-Men or at least the Pope was Spider-Man's guest-star. But no, it's…the Sandman? That crusty Spidey villain who turns to sand? Gotta be a trick…free Chee-Tos with every issue? No? Looks like readers are digging the light tone of this title and fondly remembering the first *MT-U* series.

• ***Destiny: A Chronicle of Deaths Foretold* #1** (No. 84): Remember those crazy siblings of Morpheus, star of DC's *Sandman*? They did riotous stuff like plot each other's downfalls and throw a lot of dinner parties. Morpheus is gone, but brother Destiny is raking in the dough—even without *Sandman* creator Neil Gaiman writing. This book is lower-ranked than previous *Sandman* spinoffs, largely because the $5.95 price-tag gave some readers nightmares. But DC Comics is still happy to rake in a sales winner.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special incentives), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**


WIZARD
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50
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Joe Madureira
Alex Ross
Michael Turner
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#77

NIGHTWING NO. 1/2

COMIC OFFER!

Batman Cover by
SIMON BISLEY
OR
Spawn Cover by
FRED FIELDS

BIZ 97

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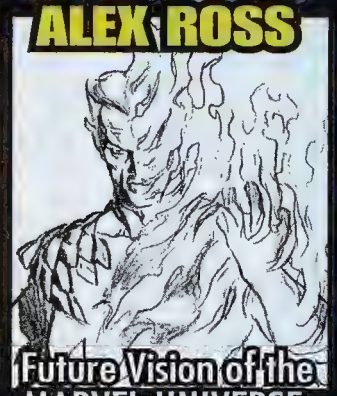
ALEX ROSS



Future Vision of the
MARVEL UNIVERSE
COMIC BOOK !

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BULL PEN

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Former Mort of the Month Elastic Lad welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section!

This month we're going to test your knowledge of the comic world's bizarre and superfluous against the odd items found stuffed into turkeys this holiday season. The better your score, the more unappetizing the menu. Ready?

Score	Rank
0-4	A complete set of DC's *Genesis* and all of its crossovers. Peee-yew, but that made "Heroes Reborn" smell good!
5-14	A fistful of the Beast's curiously curly hair.
15-19	Leech and Artie.
20	You reach inside and whoa, that's not a turkey, that's Beppo the Super-Monkey, the adorable scamp from Krypton! Get your hand *outta* there!

1. What ancient brotherhood did Gambit of the X-Men belong to back in the bayous of Louisiana?
A) the Guild of Assassins
B) the Guild of Thieves
C) the Guild of Mercenaries
D) the Fraternal Order of Clichéd Cajuns

2. What does "Ka-Zar" mean in the language of the Man-Apes of the Savage Land?
A) "Son of the Tiger"
B) "Jungle Lord"
C) "Golden Hair"
D) "Smells Like Dinosaur Dung"

3. What was Sam Wilson's criminal nickname before he became Captain America's pal, the Falcon?
A) "Flip" Wilson
B) "Snap" Wilson
C) "Wings" Wilson
D) "Crackle-Pop" Wilson

4. Which Teen Titan nearly got the whole team killed when she betrayed them to Deathstroke the Terminator and H.I.V.E.?
A) Starfire
B) Raven
C) Terra
D) Pantha

5. Who did that groovin' synthezoid, the Vision, once ask to lead a franchise team of Avengers in Chicago?
A) Doc Samson
B) Daredevil
C) Spider-Woman I
D) Squirrel Girl

6. On "Star Trek: The Next Generation," if Picard was out looking for a holographic toupee and Riker was off playing trains and tunnels with some alien bimbo, who would then be in command of the *Enterprise*?
A) Worf
B) Data
C) Geordi La Forge
D) Wesley "The Boy" Crusher

7. In what city did Wolverine and Deathblow meet years ago?
A) New York
B) Chicago
C) San Francisco
D) Madripoor

8. What was Jimmy Olsen's nickname at WGBS?
A) Mr. Action
B) The News-Hound
C) On-the-Spot Olsen
D) On-the-Pot Olsen

9. What does the acronym "TIE" stand for? Y'know, as in those really cool Star Wars TIE Fighters?
A) Tachyon-Ignited Engine
B) Thermal-Irradiated Engine
C) Twin Ion Engine
D) Technically Implausible Engine

10. This superpowered Israeli Mossad agent recently helped the X-Men fight Bastion:
A) L'Chaim.
B) Seraph.
C) Sabra.
D) Ms. Israel.

11. What ever happened to that nasty shoestring Spawn used to stitch up his even nastier face?
A) The Freak used it to hang himself.
B) Clown wears it around his wrist as a reminder that Spawn has frequently foiled his evil plans.
C) It's tied around Angela's spear as a kind of trophy.
D) Young Cyan has it tied to her pacifier.

12. Besides Bucky and Toro, what other teen punks were in the World War II fighting team known as the Kid Commandos?
A) Teen Angel and the Blazing Skull
B) The Fin and Dyno-Mite
C) Blonde Phantom and Marvel Boy
D) Golden Girl and the Human Top

13. In her original debut, who was the first villain that Batgirl fought?
A) Penguin
B) Riddler
C) Poison Ivy
D) Killer Moth

14. What villain is the bad-ass brother of Spidey's old high-school classmate, Liz Allen?
A) Green Goblin
B) Ox, from the Enforcers
C) Molten Man
D) "Sweatin' to the Oldies" icon, Richard Simmons

15. What ghastly feature does Vampirella's dead boyfriend, Adam Van Helsing, have?
A) One of his hands has been reduced to just bone.
B) He has blood dripping out of the empty sockets where his eyes used to be.
C) Ironically, he has bat wings similar to Vampirella's, but cannot fly.
D) He still wears tie-dye T-shirts. (What does he care? He's dead.)

16. How is the Juggernaut able to resist psychic attacks from his wimpy brother, Professor X?
A) Cain Marko used a psychic-dampening metal from the Cyttorak dimension to form his helmet, thus providing him with mental protection.
B) Black Tom Cassidy was able to conjure up a spell that gave Juggernaut "psychic immunity."
C) The gem of Cyttorak not only gave Marko the power of a Juggernaut, but also made him impervious to all psychic attacks.
D) Using the 1-900-PSYCHIC hotline, Marko is able to not only resist psychic attacks, but also find out if true love is in his future.

17. How did Ashley Quinn's father die?
A) He had a heart attack while helping two children out of a burning apartment.
B) He was drowned by organized crime thugs after he found out they were setting a string of fires in an insurance scam.
C) While sneaking out one night, Ash accidentally tipped over a candle that burned down his house, along with killing his father.
D) An anvil fell on his head.

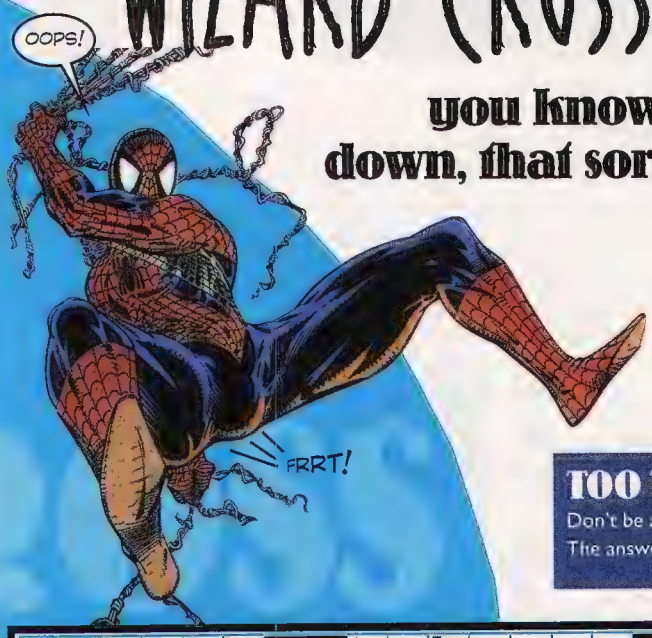
18. What's the name of Thunderbolts member Atlas' cuter-than-cute girlfriend?
A) Karla Sofen
B) Dallas Riordan
C) Ororo Munroe
D) Mary Desmond

19. Besides enhanced strength, flight and being able to breathe water, what superpower does the Sub-Mariner have, although he's only used it on a few occasions?
A) He is able to emit an electrical blast (kind of like an electric eel).
B) He is able to psionically create huge tidal waves.
C) He can telepathically cause either severe aggression or calm serenity in the minds of aquatic animals.
D) Under severe duress, he has been able to morph into a more feral form.

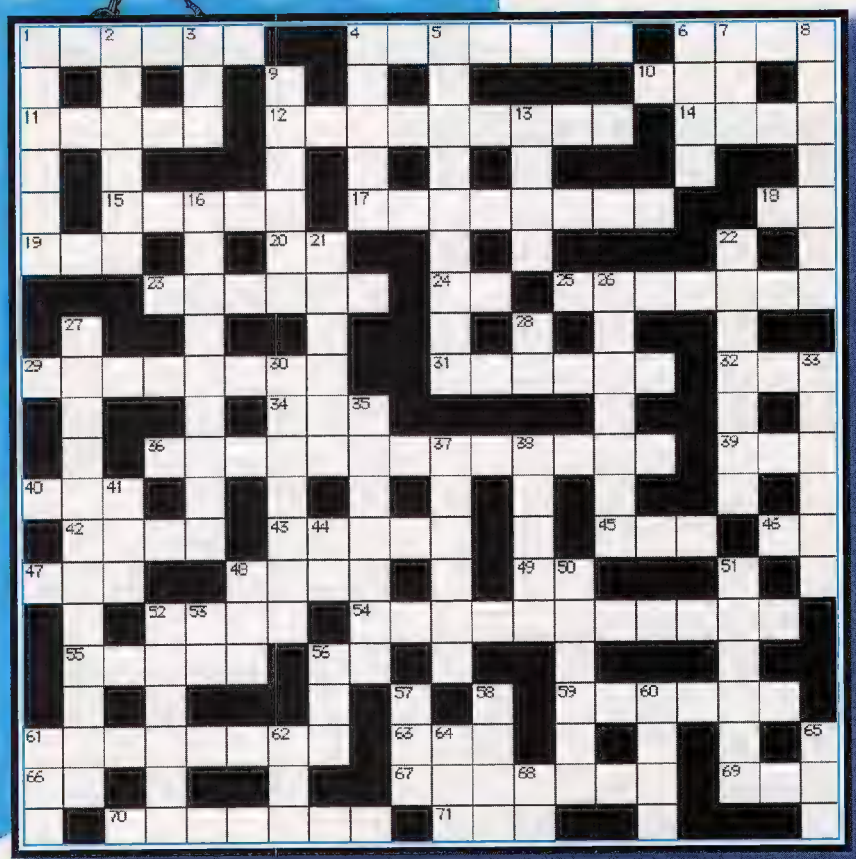
20. Junior from *Young Heroes in Love* has what superpowers?
A) He can make clones of himself at will.
B) He can shrink his body and grow to enormous sizes.
C) He's just a tiny, tiny man who has no superpowers.
D) He can immediately tell who just farted in a room full of people.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff



TOO TOUGH?
Don't be a wussy.
The answers are on page 214.



1. Hawkeye's weapons
4. Thanos' brother
6. DC's original Monarch
10. recently left *Voyager*
11. Chameleon is a master of these
12. black Man in Black
14. new comic book star Jackie
15. Cliff Steele is half this
17. Geo-Force's nation
18. Iron Man foe Morgan __ Fey
19. Worf's girlfriend
20. *X-Files* artist; initials
23. Godzilla's winged insect foe
24. "Look! Up __ the sky!"
25. smoking sister of 7 down
29. Miss America and Whizzer's team
31. Defenders' Cloud can switch this
32. Spidey and Robin are masters of this
34. subversive Marvel organization
36. Zoo Crew rabbit
39. cyborg of Galador
40. Parallax saved this
42. WildC.A.T. Cole
43. Amazing Amazon actress
45. the Living Planet
46. "___ evil shall escape my sight!"
47. Dark Horse's *White Like* ___
48. Dial "H" for ____
49. *Razor* and *Samson* artist; init.
52. TV's new adventure series
54. TV's hot adventure star
55. Pinky's partner
56. destroyed DC and massacred Marvel; init.
59. Ultron's creation
61. John Jameson's lycanthropic alias
63. "A long time ____, in a galaxy..."
66. DC's Sentinel; init.
67. Badger's hometown
69. Egyptian Serpent Society member
70. John Walker
71. Future Force leader

1. Pennyworth or Neuman
2. Speed Racer's heroic brother
3. Golden Age Sandman's nickname
4. Darkchylde's town
5. Crusher Creel; the _____ Man
6. *Avengers'* second artist
7. firefighting, father-killing hero
8. Kyle Rayner uses this
9. Sam Burke's partner
13. dated the Wasp; ____ Man
16. early Hitman story
21. Hal Jordan's gal pal
22. L-Ron took over his body
26. Liefeld's comic company
27. new Caliber crime comic
28. Alan Davis' inking partner; init.
30. Gustav Krueger of the Serpent Society
33. Sentinel from the future
35. Hellboy creator
37. Spidey's gambling assassin foe
38. replaced Tony Stark as Iron Man
41. a word Banshee would say
44. early Simon & Kirby comic; init.
48. Corellia's contribution to "Star Wars"
50. butler to Tony Stark
51. Dawn's boy-toy
52. *Superboy and the* _____
53. *Aster* artist; init.
56. Heimdall's sister
57. Falcon's first name
58. Jedi master
60. *Rise of the Midnight* ____
61. Apocalypse's newest Horseman
62. WildStorm bigwig
64. occasionally evil Titan
65. *Angel and the* ___
68. junior JSA book; init.

BULL PEN

Office Wars

The office of *Wizard* Editors Andrew Kardon, Greg Orlando and Marc Wilkofsky was "hit." The trio entered their shared office on the morning of September 16 to find their desks facing the wrong way and corkboards and posters facing the wall, while everything else that could be turned around was. The alleged culprits: the staff of *ToyFare* (*TF*), Wizard Press' toy magazine housed in the office next door.

Though claiming ignorance of the crime, the *TF* team entered their offices on the morning of September 18 to find everything in it—along with the office itself—Saran-wrapped. The desks, chairs, bulletin boards, action figures—even rubber bands and pens—were all individually wrapped. "My first thought was to mummify Wilkofsky with the discarded wrap," *TF* Editor Scott Beatty commented. "Though, on the plus side, our office has never been so fresh and free of freezer burn." Assistant Editor Tom Palmer Jr., busy with the chore of unwrapping Micro Machine Stormtroopers, had no time to comment, though Copy Editor Tom Root summed up his office's feelings best with: "We've got an endless supply of Nerf weapons and Jawa slingshot fodder. The *Wizard* guys have NO idea who they're dealing with."

Upon hearing Root's quote, *Wizard*'s Andrew Kardon had one message for the *ToyFare* crew: "We're the guys who stole Jim Lee's robe. Twice. They should know when they're just out of their league."

We'll run the obituaries next month.

Exhibit A: a well-wrapped desk.

One of the Damned

Dan Reilly

art assistant, Wizard: The Guide to Comics

What do you do at Wizard Press?
I run the research department—I help the editorial department check facts, and get artwork for every feature and section in *Wizard*, *InQuest*, *ToyFare* and the specials. I traffic text and artwork to the design department and to outside freelancers, and set up photo shoots for every magazine. I'm also known for being very grumpy and accident-prone.

Your favorite sections in *Wizard*?
"Magic Words"—every now and then I need a good laugh, and it's really funny—and "Character Profile," which keeps me aware of the different aspects of many characters.

What surprised you the most about the Wizard offices?
At any moment in time, you can walk around the corner and find something that is completely ridiculous, and makes you either wonder why you're working here or just feel glad to be here.

Illustration by Jim Cubby

What's the most interesting fact you've discovered in your research travels?
The thing that surprises me a lot is that comic artists and writers don't know comic history; you'd expect them to know at least the general Marvel and DC Universes. And most people don't know how to pronounce Mjolnir or Mxyzptlk.

Who would play you in a movie?
Michael J. Fox, as he appeared in "The Frighteners," after gaining 20 pounds. And everyone says I look like the cop from "South Park"—which I totally refuse to believe.

Favorite TV shows?
"Early Edition"—because it's about getting the newspaper early (What would *you* do?)—any Yankee game, and whatever my wife Nora is watching. And I liked the original "Due South," before it was canceled.

What hobbies or outside interests do you have?
Playing softball and golf, and my wife is my main outside interest.

What do you wish more people would realize?
That people will make mistakes—there are going to be mistakes—so don't go crazy. Of course, I go crazy every time someone makes a mistake.

Favorite comics right now?
I'm waiting for the new *Avengers* and *Captain America* titles to come out; I really like Pérez, and Waid and Garney's version of Cap. With the exception of some Bat-books and *JLA*, I'm mostly a Marvel geek at heart.

What superpower would you want, and why?
I'd want to become Molecule Man—that way, I could get rid of my beer gut any time I wanted.

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 things the Celestials want to give a thumbs-down to other than Earth in *Heroes Reborn: The Return*

10. The Spice Girls (except Scary Spice—Oneg the Prober likes her).
9. Whoever started the saying "You're da bomb!"
8. Wesley.
7. The guy who invented Circus Peanuts.
6. Whoever gives away Circus Peanuts on Halloween.
5. Whoever likes Circus Peanuts.
4. That weird operating channel you turn to late at nigh that shows doctors operating on eyes and stuff. Eeewwww.
3. "Star Trek: Voyager." One of the main characters is the cook? The *cook?!?* And Paramount wonders why Trek fans are insulted.
2. The Fighting American (you guys ain't foolin' nobody).
1. Joel Schumacher. Thanks for killing the franchise, dillweed.

CONTEST WINNERS

BATMAN & ROBIN, *Wizard* #71: Tobias Keegan Stenson, of Fort Collins, Colo., would join the Dynamic Duo as Solarvoltaic, the Solar Defender of Earth! "I am the physical manifestation of the sun's power, which is held in the obsidian shell that covers my body," says Tobias; check out his computerized self-depiction below!

STAR TREK, #71: Kevon Huntley, Southington, Conn.
X-MEN, #71: Steve Letzing, Madison, Wis.

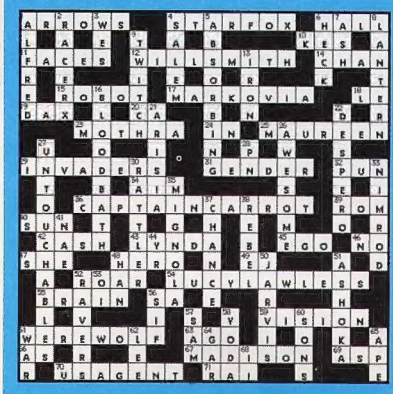
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 212

1. B	5. A	9. C	13. D	17. C
2. A	6. B	10. C	14. C	18. B
3. B	7. C	11. D	15. B	19. A
4. C	8. A	12. D	16. A	20. C

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 213



WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

RANDY QUEEN

Randy Queen only comes out at night. And the brains behind Image's *Darkchylde* says there's a good reason why his pencil doesn't touch paper until the moon rises. "At night is when the creative thing happens," says the 26-year-old Atlanta resident who's quick with the quip and a dash of bravado. "When there's nothing good on television and your friends stop calling, that's when the switch goes on."

The comic book switch flicked on early for Queen. As a child, he not only read the exploits of Spider-Man, He-Man and Hulk, he lived them. "I was the kind of kid who would put on a Spider-Man costume, try to leap over a fence and get hung up on it until somebody came and rescued me. And that's a true story."

Also true is that Queen, after a sabbatical from comics, once again got bit in the 7th grade. "My friend and I were in detention and I was bored. He handed me a copy of an X-Men comic. I was surprised at how good it was and pretty much decided, at that point, comics was what I wanted to do."

Paul Schiraldi

After high school, Queen spent the next four years attending comic shows, paying dues and "developing rhinoceros skin" in the face of constant rejection. He finally broke through in '92 on equal parts guts and talent. "I drove to a Houston show because I knew Todd McFarlane was going to be there. I ran into Todd in a hotel lobby, twisted his arm, jumped on his back and said, 'You gotta look at my stuff.' He did, liked [my] Winky drawing and I ended up breaking in with a Winky pin-up in *Spawn* #7." A similar sneak attack on Jim Valentino resulted in Queen inking *ShadowHawk* #11 and #14, *The ShadowHawk Gallery* and some trading cards. A slightly less forceful barrage at the San Diego Comic Con ended with Queen pencil-pushing on *Cyberforce Origins* #2-#3 and a back-up story in *Cyberforce* #13-#15.

At that point, Queen decided it was time to dust off his own creation, Darkchylde. He showed it to Maximum Press, and it ran there for a while, but "things didn't work out. Fortunately, Image was there to throw me a lifeline."

With September's *Darkchylde* #5 behind him, the writer/artist is prepping a new *Darkchylde* series for early 1998 called *Darkchylde: The Legacy*, which he describes as "a cross-country murder mystery."

Queen laughingly admits that his nocturnal work habits often put a crimp in his social life. "Girlfriends? I try to squeeze them in whenever possible. I've been a slave to women many times and it never works out. So, for a while, I'm going to be selfish and be a slave to the work."

By Marc Shapiro

Darkchylde *(right)* and Queen's first published work in Spawn.

First comic read...
I saved 32 cents in pennies, dumped them on the 7-11 counter and got [Marvel's] *Star Wars* #4. I was hooked.

Favorite comics of all time...
The Dark Knight Returns and *Watchmen*. Both are real works of art.

Favorite work of your own...
All I see are the mistakes. Given that, *Darkchylde* #4 has had the fewest mistakes.

Superpower you would most want...
Flying. I'd probably have to follow the roads so I wouldn't get lost.

Comics you currently read...
Spawn, *Gen13* and *The Tenth*. I like the dark elements and the angst.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
Peanut-flavored Power Bars.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
As a kid, I had a giant Godzilla I was nuts over. As an adult, my new '97 Pathfinder.

Things you collect...
Too damned many toys. I gotta stop!

People you would most want to meet...
Jack Nicholson, Steve Perry and Niki Taylor. They're all real cool.

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...
Kiefer Sutherland

Favorite cartoon...
"Animaniacs" is pretty funny.

People you would most like to work with...
Jack Nicholson and Todd McFarlane. They're both heroes to me.

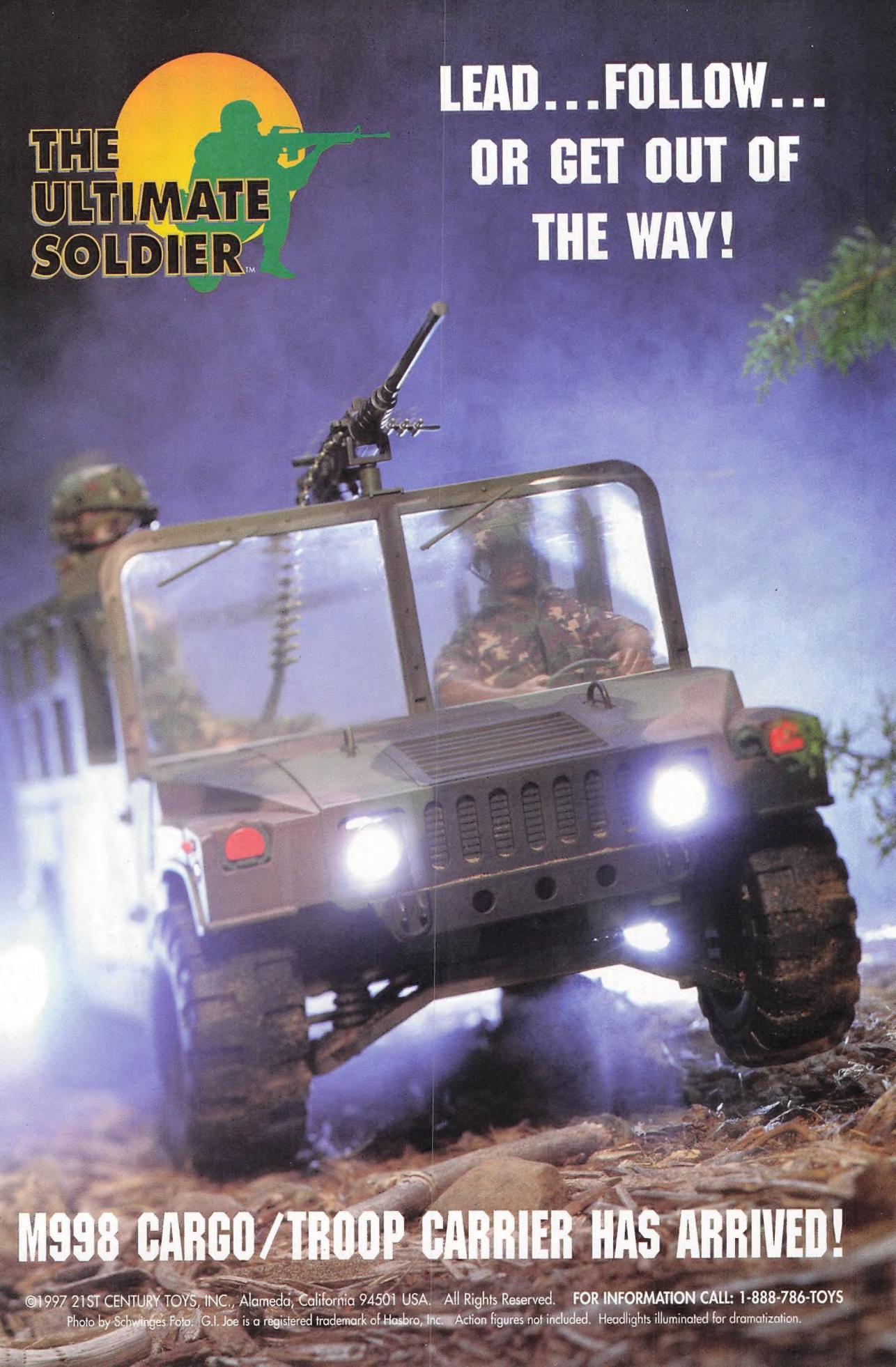
Favorite musical performers...
Journey

Favorite TV show...
"Beverly Hills, 90210." Don't call me Wednesdays from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Last good movie you saw...
"Blood and Wine"—I like Jack Nicholson; that's the only reason to watch this.

Last good book you read...
Jack's Life, by Patrick McGilligan. The book goes a long way toward explaining why we tend to make celebrities into gods.

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd like the power to make my deadlines without the use of caffeine. W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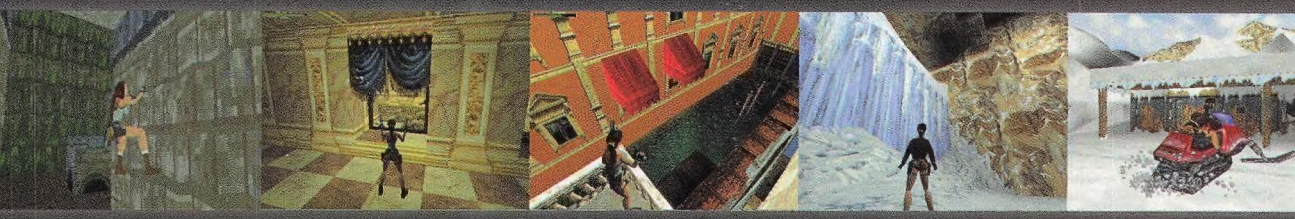

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